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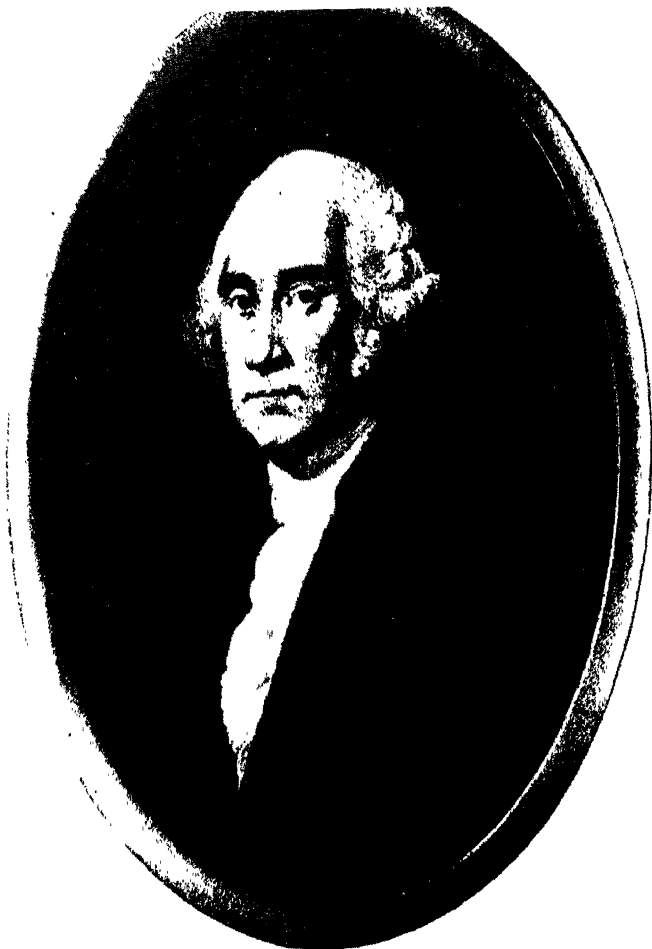












GEORGE WASHINGTON

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# AS A BUSINESS MAN

BY

HALSTED L. RITTER

JUDGE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART

HISTORIAN OF THE UNITED STATES

GEORGE WASHINGTON BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION



*ILLUSTRATED*

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WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

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TO MY SON



*"The test of the progress of mankind will be their appreciation of the character of Washington."*

—LORD BROUGHAM.

*"He had a great zest for business."*

—WOODROW WILSON.

*"There is an honor in business that is the fine gold of it; that reckons with every man justly; that loves light; that regards kindness and fairness more highly than goods or profits. It becomes a man more than his furnishings or his house. It speaks for him in the heart of everyone. His friendships are serene and secure. His strength is like a young tree by a river."*





# INTRODUCTION

BY ALBERT BUSHNELL HART

HISTORIAN OF THE UNITED STATES  
GEORGE WASHINGTON BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

IN the immense and growing literature of histories, biographies and special works bearing upon the period of George Washington, one large interest of that great man has been neglected. Americans are accustomed to think of Washington as the boy who chopped down the cherry tree, as the colonial soldier at Braddock's Ford, as the first commander-in-chief of an army of the United States, as the wise president, and as the sage of Mount Vernon. The changes have been rung upon what have been considered the three main achievements of his life,—namely, Indian fighting, British fighting, and first presidency of the United States.

During the last twenty years scholars and readers in American history have begun to realize that Washington was wider than the colonies or the Confederation or the Federal government of the United States. Attention has been given by a group of scholars, investigators, to Washington as a founder of a republic many times larger than the thirteen original states. Washington's first public appearance as a national character was the resolute young fellow in the depths of the western wilderness. In recent years several writers, most of them Western men, have described Wash-

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ington as a Western man; the whole country is now aware that no man of his period had such a vision of the West as an essential part of the group of communities which were to make up a mighty United States. Hence a succession of excellent books about Washington as a frontiersman, as a land buyer in the West, as a traveler, and as a road maker. Within the last ten years writers have awakened to the knowledge that Washington's life and interests and activities, from his first days as a wage-earning surveyor to his last days spent in the management of his farm, included the experiences of a vigorous man of affairs. We are beginning to understand that Washington was not only explorer, soldier and statesman; but also a shrewd, hardheaded, practical, successful business man. He was endowed with a vision of affairs and with a skill in combining human forces in business enterprises which in our times would have placed him at the head of great organizers and employers and developers of natural resources.

Washington's business capacity was shown in an understanding of the foundations of successful enterprises. No private individual of his time was such a recorder of business details. He had no knowledge of scientific bookkeeping with its double entry and trial balances and elaborate annual statements; but he developed his own methods of record and of analysis of accounts. Among the most interesting of these Washington memorabilia are his elaborate *Diary* which fills four modern volumes; and his numerous books of original entry of accounts. With the kind of records which even a successful American merchant in the Eight-

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eenth Century kept, it was very difficult to know which department of a business was paying and which was losing. George Washington managed every year, except when called away from his place of business by public necessities, to figure out what each of a group of plantations cost and what each produced that year. On that information he proceeded to make his decision as to the planting for the next year. Compared with other statesman-farmers in his own community, he far surpassed them in his knowledge of the intricate business of carrying on a group of plantations involving not only tillage but many mechanical arts. Another proof of Washington's great business ability is that even during the Revolution when his farms were carried on by a deputy, there seems to have been an annual profit in most years, which is more than most farmers on a large scale can say today.

Very little has appeared in periodical articles on Washington's business experience; and most of the books which touch on his enterprises start out from the point of view of his interests in western lands or in agriculture, or in shipping, for he actually built a small craft of his own and sailed her on the Potomac. More attention has been paid to his great interest in transportation and particularly in canals running inward from the seaboard of Virginia and Maryland. Up to this time, however, there has been no systematic publication on Washington in all his varied business activities, nor the effect upon the national fortunes of his ability not only to organize an army but to keep it in the field; and likewise his ability to convince the other men associated with

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him in the organization of the new Federal Republic, of the necessity of taxation, control of trade, interstate and international, and currency and banking, as a national business proposition.

In this age of big business in which men are constantly judged by their power to carry on large enterprises, to employ large numbers of men and to create immense plants employing large numbers of men, there seems nothing unusual in Washington's numerous private business enterprises. In the Eighteenth Century he foresaw the necessity of skilled business management. For Washington was a scientific agriculturist far in advance of most of his countrymen in the skill with which he managed that side of his business. He was also a transportation man on a large scale for the times. He was a manufacturer of foodstuffs and plantation necessities. He was a capitalist, placing his loans chiefly on landed security. He was a banker. He was a road builder. He was a scientific agriculturist; the first to practice systematically the method of experiment stations. He was a builder of a sailing craft. He was a wealthy man, often made loans to his neighbors, and patriotically accepted the consequences when those neighbors repaid him in depreciated currency.

Judge Ritter, in this "Washington as a Business Man," has brought out these various phases of Washington's activities, and is the first writer to essay a connected self-explanatory account of the various fields of Washington's business. He observes the early evidences of Washington's business sagacity as shown in his first professional business,—that of a

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surveyor, and in his subsequent land transactions. Those fields, particularly his western enterprises, have engaged the attention of several careful writers. Judge Ritter therefore passes quickly from that foundation of Washington's later wealth to a careful study of his business methods, briefly on his plantation management, which is more detailed and more incisive than any previous writer on Washington as an active business man, buying and selling, and when necessary borrowing. The chapter on the Man in the Community brings into light Washington's public interest, his liberality in public calamities, his amicable relations with his neighbors. The chapter on The Business General is one of the few available researches into Washington's services to his country through his capacity to manage large bodies of men and large transactions. His correspondence is full of appeals to Congress to come up to the scratch with supplies for the troops. No other general could possibly have held together the ragged and hungry troops at Valley Forge.

These business habits were especially valuable to his country in Washington's influence on the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Without ever taking the floor to make an argument there is no doubt that Washington's committee and personal intercourse with fellow members was a very strong influence in securing a constitution which provided the necessary powers of national finance and of national control of foreign, interstate and other lines of business. It seems very unlikely that that constitution could have been ratified in Virginia but for the knowledge that it satisfied the greatest Virginian.

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Judge Ritter also brings out in this book the very great influence of Washington in applying these broad national powers. In our generation we are accustomed to see Congress creating and regulating (and once abandoning) a national system of banks and bank circulation. Previous to 1789 only three or four joint stock banks had been created by state charters; and a national Bank of the United States would have been almost unthinkable at that time but for Washington's vigorous support. So with the assumption of the state debts; Washington backed up Hamilton in that measure, so important for tranquilizing the finances of the nation, because Washington's practical business experience had taught him the necessity of funding the public debt before it ran away with the prosperity of the country.

A special and almost neglected period in Washington's life is brought out in the chapter of this book which relates the business-like way in which he undertook to organize a proper army when placed in command of the forces to be raised in 1798, should the expected war with France come to pass. Washington was also interested in one of the greatest aids to business,—namely, the proper education of the young. He liberally provided for the college education of stepsons and their sons. He subscribed to the so-called free school at Alexandria. He left a bequest for a national university.

Washington was also a large employer of labor of various descriptions. He owned slaves and managed them and his wife's slaves; and his *Diary* bears witness to his experience that slavery was uneconomical. His own efforts to manu-

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facture clothes and other staples on the plantation brought out the waste of slavery. He "bought redemptioners," but was never satisfied with labor on those terms of semi-servitude. Late in life he received Bishop Asbury who urged him to come out against slavery; and expressed to the bishop his opposition to that form of labor; and he clinched that judgment by setting his own slaves free by his will.

Judge Ritter has left for other writers the study of Washington's career as a professional engineer, which brought out his skill as an organizer of commercial operations, such as his success in draining the Dismal Swamp. He alludes also to his large holdings of western lands, the estimated value of which made him probably the richest man of his time.

The most important generalization to be founded upon Judge Ritter's book is that Washington was one of the few men who faced the problem of handling a group of landed properties by applying modern methods to the plantations; and he made money where others lost. When he traveled in New England he was much interested in the little textile mills that were being established. What might have been his success as the owner of large factories with intelligent free labor?

As a business man, Washington throughout his life showed good temper, a spirit of fair dealing, a desire to act in harmony with his neighbors. He was very impatient of cheating, or of the refusal of a slave or free hand to do a decent day's work. Why not? One of the major secrets of Washington's remarkable business success is that he never



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spared himself. The lesson of his life is that of an extraordinary variety of interests combined with remarkable foresight into the future developments of his country, and an inborn executive capacity which led him to put things through. He built a sea-going craft, he built and operated a mill, he was the first important man to see that tobacco culture was sucking the goodness out of the land and not restoring it to the owner's pocket.

The bottom factor, the foundation of Washington's character, however, was his remarkable sense of justice, of what was due to the other man. His diary is full of instances of sympathy with those who owed but honestly could not pay. The example of Washington is that of a rich man who gained and held his wealth by aiding in the development of his neighborhood, of his state and of his country. Judge Ritter has performed a public service in placing before his readers the details of that great character, great not only in war, in peace, and the hearts of his countrymen, but in his power to use the resources of nature and the common labor of his fellow beings to improve the conditions of his commonwealth and his country.

## FOREWORD

THERE is no gainsaying the fact that business is the obsession of the North American. Stuart Chase, the economist, in his book "Prosperity—Fact or Myth," asserts concerning our day: "Above all, the period has witnessed the emergence of the business man as the dictator of our destinies. As admirably demonstrated in Middletown, he has ousted the statesman, the priest, the philosopher, as the creator of standards of ethics and behavior, and has become the final authority on the conduct of American society."

Is this emergence of the business man a miracle, wrought by the sudden advent of scientific discovery and the hunger of people for comfortable living, or is it the product of our years of growth? I am convinced that he is indigenous to our soil. His roots lie deep in our historic past. He officiated at the birth of our nation. Tradition would not release him to the public view until now.

George Washington was in reality a great business man. He is the prototype of the modern man of business. His numerous biographers have been too preoccupied with the appeal of other phases of his life to risk a more or less practical and somewhat unromantic presentation of his business genius and achievements. The nearest approach has been by Mr. Paul Haworth in his "George Washington—Farmer." But Washington was far more than a farmer in his indus-

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trial outlook and activities. He lifted farming into agriculture, and agriculture into an industry. Many financial and industrial enterprises held his interest and drew his personal attention. Utilizing the scientific knowledge of his day, adopting the latest available tools and machinery, some of them his own inventions, backing them with great managerial ability and foresight, he accomplished amazing results. President Coolidge has well said that "If there was ever a self-made man it was George Washington."

The complacent simplicity, not to say crudeness, of methods of conducting business and particularly farming, in the colonial days, stimulated Washington to devise, use, and publicly advocate new systems and ways, the principles and forms of which are in use to this day. He made agriculture a business; farming a profession. The colonial farmer was not easily converted to changes in his manner of doing things, and Washington realized the necessity of public education in reference to the successful cultivation of the soil, harvesting, preparing and marketing of crops. He was a man of many enterprises. His industry was prodigious. Devoting nearly one half of his best days to the country's welfare, he yet found time to carry on his varied financial activities. As a business executive he had in his period no superior. The fundamental principle underlying all his private business operations was that the possession of property obligated one to make it produce profitably for the owner and at the same time contribute something to the common good.

A well-informed historian says of Washington that "few

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men in history have lived so open a life," and yet we are just finding the true man. A mass of new material has aided us. The real Washington is to be found, not alone in public services to mankind, but in the pragmatic life of his business affairs, wherein the "highest wisdom of Common Sense," tireless industry, infinite painstaking, careful investigation, progressive action, and a sound judgment were displayed to an unusual degree.

Herbert B. Adams has declared, "It would seem as though in one way or another, all lines of our public policy lead back to Washington, as all roads led to Rome."

Whatever motives may have induced the Colonists to migrate to this country, the main driving force leading them to decide in 1776 on severance from England was economic. The cry of "taxation without representation," the struggle to maintain trading privileges, to own and protect property, and the constant friction between the colonies themselves, were all, in reality, connected with business matters. The colonies desired to do business for themselves and to develop a commercial system of their own. Washington was a leader in this movement by reason of his large commercial activities.

Religious and political liberty were great incentives to hold the people together for the Revolutionary War and the approval of the governmental system afterwards devised. They framed ideals which fired the imagination and lifted the emotions; but a plan of government which would protect life and liberty, when people settled down to live together in the struggle for property and those things which

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lead to happiness, must be bottomed upon sound business principles, freed from emotionalism or the drum-beat of war. Washington was imbued with the lofty idealism of the Revolution, but his clear vision comprehended the futility of success in the war unless a working plan could be devised which would permit business to flourish and spread its opportunities equally among the people.

He does not rank among the greatest generals of history. His military leadership rests, not so much upon the strategy of war, as upon his ability to keep an army in the field under the distressing conditions of lack of food and supplies. His management of the business end of the war was his great talent. The recruiting of soldiers, the feeding and clothing of an army, the adjusting of jealousies and hatreds among the officers and militiamen from the different colonies, the handling of the governors and of Continental Congress, and the securing of advancements of money from patriotic citizens of wealth mark his strategic abilities and were what won the War of the Revolution. These were qualities of the great business man.

His wonderful grasp of the administrative side of government was the source of his influence in the formation of the Constitution and his success as President. He understood the ramifications of trade and commerce among the Colonies and States. He saw clearly the need for means of transportation, uniform currency, systems for acquiring property, for spreading and controlling trade. He was a genius at organization. His business preparation for the tasks thrown

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upon him in these public matters has not been sufficiently featured by his biographers.

Military genius is usually founded upon strategy, expediency, or cunning. We associate statesmanship with great moral ideas, with attitudes, or with evolution of means; it is engrossed with great themes of civilization which promulgate the right as against the wrong in the freeing of human life from oppression. No general or president of the United States in our history has been credited with possessing brilliant business ability in many fields according to our common acceptance of that term. Yet such credit must now be given to Washington; for, accompanying his military leadership and his statesmanship, was a keen and refined business sense.

His greatness, in the last analysis, rests upon the fact that he was by nature and by thorough training the greatest business man of his time, not so much in the accumulation of wealth as in the application of business principles to all of his undertakings.

We recognize that the United States Government is, in fact, a great business enterprise. It was launched by the heart and brain of business men, and it has ever leaned upon business men who have contributed to it heroic service from a love of mankind. It will more and more call upon such men because of the complexity of conditions which the growth of commerce is producing. A bank official recently wrote: "Demands of business are responsible for many new laws, and the law in turn is constantly shaping business practices and growth." The hope of the future in this

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Union of ours lies with those who devotedly contribute to its welfare a share of their business ability, as did George Washington. He loved business not only for itself as his source of livelihood but because it was the means for the development of a people.

The effort in this book is to disclose the real man in the midst of his labors and to show how successfully he carried his private business along with his multifarious public duties. As much as possible I have endeavored to let him speak in revelation of himself through his letters, diaries, public papers and addresses. I have endeavored, through many years of research, to find the reliable sources of information. I am seeking simply to stress the main phase of his life, all too lightly touched upon by others, which accounts for his marvelous career and his enduring fame.

I know of no one whose life so well exemplifies the ideals of American business and the successful use of fortitude, intelligence, patience, and willpower in their realization.

I am greatly indebted to Prof. Albert Bushnell Hart for the courage he inspired in me to present the book and the valuable assistance he rendered in its preparation.

HALSTED L. RITTER.

MIAMI, FLORIDA,

JULY 20TH, 1931.

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WASHINGTON  
AS A BUSINESS MAN



## CHAPTER I

### DETERMINED YOUTH

ON a crisp March day in 1748 a lad of sixteen slung his surveying instruments over his sturdy shoulders and started for the Blue Ridge mountains in Virginia. In his possession was a commission from Lord Thomas Fairfax to survey part of his large tract of land in the Shenandoah valley. Healthy, strong of body, and full of the confidence and pride of youth, he was happy over this first recognition of his chosen profession. The surveyor was in great demand in those days. Vast areas were boundaryless. Lord Fairfax alone had 5,000,000 acres to lay out. The boy's inclination, as well as the advice of his brothers, led him to decide on surveying as his field of opportunity. He little dreamed, however, that this employment was to launch a career totally different from that of a land surveyor.

During the three years spent in this work he became enured to the hardship of outdoor life; made the acquaintance of the Indians and settlers; acquired an intimate knowledge of lands, soils, timber, and game; located and constructed roads and camps, and above all became master of himself.

The contract was profitable in a money way. His wages

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varied according to the weather and length of the day's work, ranging from \$7.20 to \$21.70 per day in modern money value. The work was arduous and full of discomforts. One day, weary and lonesome, he wrote: "There's nothing could make it pass off tolerably but a good reward."

Washington Irving, writing of this period of George Washington's life, aptly said: "His rugged and toilsome expedition in the mountains among rude scenes and rough people, enured him to hardships and made him apt at expedients; while his intercourse with his cultivated brother and with various members of the Fairfax family had a happy effect in toning up his mind and manner, and counteracted the careless and self-indulged habitude of the wilderness."

The buying and selling of land was the main business in those days. The land owners were the influential persons. The young surveyor kept his eyes open and early selected and patented five hundred acres of wild land in Frederick County. With pride he named these acres from the creek along which they lay, "My Bull-skin Plantation." When he was eighteen he purchased from one James McCracken four hundred fifty-six acres adjoining this "plantation" for one hundred twelve pounds, which he was able to pay for out of his earnings. The clearing and cultivating of the land was not long delayed.

His father's will gave George a few acres on the Rappahannock which he was to have when he reached twenty-

## DETERMINED YOUTH

one years, but there is no record that he ever came into possession of them. If he was to prosper, the boy realized that he was dependent upon his own earnings and industry. President Coolidge has said, "If ever there was a self-made man, it was George Washington."

At nineteen his success in surveying the Fairfax lands gained him appointment as the official surveyor of Culpeper County, thereby placing him at the head of his profession. One of his first commissions was to lay out the town site of Alexandria. Further responsibilities were soon thrown upon him, the first of which was his appointment by Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia as Major and Adjutant General of the Northern Military District, comprising eleven counties of Virginia. The colony had been divided into four such districts to better encourage a military spirit and afford organization and discipline for the militia, the creation of which was necessary to the protection of the colonists from the encroachment of the Indians and attacks from the French, who were threatening to descend from the north.

The salary was five hundred dollars a year. The major had to buy accoutrements, enlist the men, organize and drill the recruits. Washington had had very little previous training for the work, but he had a fine athletic figure, a commanding personality, was strong as a woodsman and was a natural leader of men. He had read such books on military tactics and science as were available, had practiced the manual of arms, and had taken sound instructions from



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Captain Jacob Vanbraam, a Dutch soldier of fortune and a famous fencing master. He had absorbed much from conversations with his brother Lawrence, with William Fairfax, and with other men who had knowledge of military affairs from experience, and was thoroughly imbued with the necessity for military preparation. He threw himself into these duties with the fervor of a young patriot.

Washington's great business capacity began here to exhibit itself. In a surprisingly short time his district was well organized, militiamen were equipped and ready for service. His keen negotiations for supplies and equipment saved a large part of the appropriation. It was necessary for him to travel over his district, and thus he acquired a thorough knowledge of the Potomac and James river regions, and made the acquaintance of many people. Within a day's ride from Mount Vernon were many beautiful homes where educated and traveled people lived, such as the Masons, Lees, Fitzhughs, Carters, and Fauntleroyes. Along the Potomac and the Rappahannock lived Colonel Lewis Littlepage, who had been Chamberlain to the King of England; Colonel John Parker, who had been Aide-de-camp to the Duke of Marlborough, and others who maintained the stately etiquette and the conventionalities of high English society. With most of these men he was to clash in that day when human rights were asserted against the Crown, and their magnificent estates were to be abandoned to a new commonwealth.

## CHAPTER II

### ADDED EQUIPMENT

**D**URING his twentieth year Washington purchased five hundred and fifty-two additional acres on the south fork of Bullskin creek near his "Plantation," for one hundred and fifty pounds. By this time he had acquired fifteen hundred acres of good land and had spent considerable money in improvements. It is estimated, as the records are not complete enough to state definitely, that he had made at least twenty thousand dollars in five years, which was a goodly sum in those days; and, contrary to the general belief, he was not penniless when the inheritance from his brother Lawrence came to him. He had already started on the road to wealth and would have acquired it without assistance.

Lawrence Washington, a devoted half-brother, died during the same year, leaving a will wherein George was named as one of the five executors, and devising to him Mount Vernon after the death of Sarah, the only child. The child survived her father a very short time. After her death Washington negotiated a deal with his sister-in-law, by which for fifteen thousand pounds of tobacco yearly, or the equivalent in current money during her life, she deeded

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

her life estate to him; thereby he came into full control, through fee title, to the land. The money value of this annuity in 1755 was about \$475, and somewhat less during the next succeeding years to the time of the widow's death in 1761. This was a good cash rental for those days.

The other four executors, discovering the ability and energy of Washington, threw the burden of administration upon his shoulders. There were many financial difficulties to be unraveled. Inventories, appraisements, reports, and merchandising accounts had to be made. Lawrence was the principal stockholder in the Principio Iron Works, which operated profitable mines in Maryland and Virginia, and had been active in the conduct of the business. George stepped into Lawrence's place in this industry until the estate's interest was sold. Here he obtained his first experience in an industrial enterprise.

Lawrence had been president and a large stockholder in the Ohio Company, which had been formed in 1747 by nineteen Virginians to develop 500,000 acres of lands from crown grants "on the western waters of Virginia." George's connection as executor threw him into active control of this company and led to his acquaintance with the great west, which was to play so prominent a part in his career.

The French were asserting a right to this land, to all the land, in fact, west of the Alleghenies included in the rich and fertile Ohio and Mississippi valleys, and had prepared to take it by force. The company had sent an agent named

## ADDED EQUIPMENT

Christopher Gist to gather information concerning the French activities and encroachments and to ascertain the allegiance of the Indians, but he had been turned back by the threats of the enemy. Governor Dinwiddie was himself heavily interested in the Ohio Company and had reported conditions to the authorities in London, from whom he had orders to notify the French to desist from encroachment and remove their fortifications at the forks of the Ohio; if not obeyed, he was to employ force to drive them away. He decided to send an "express messenger" to give this notice. By reason of his surveying record, his knowledge of the country and his reputation as a woodsman, together with his familiarity with the Indians and his interest as executive head of the Ohio Company, the Governor selected George Washington for the task, saying as he handed him his instructions, "Thou art a braw laddie."

Without hesitation Washington set out in December, 1753, when twenty-one years old, on this seven-hundred-mile journey through forests and over mountains where no trails had yet been made and through a region inhabited by hostile Indians. As usual, he was unafraid. History has often told the story of this heroic trip and the fortitude and sagacity displayed. The journey proved to be a wonderfully profitable experience for Washington. He saw the fertile lands of this new country, the rushing rivers, the marvelous lumber and fur trade possibilities. He visualized settlers and prosperous industry. He met the hardy,

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

venturesome frontiersmen, learned more of the crafty Indian, and made the acquaintance of the adventurous Frenchmen, who refused to consider seriously the warning message delivered. Such was Washington's introduction to a territory in which he was to be much interested later, both as a land owner and as a President struggling to establish the land policies of a nation.

As was his custom, he made voluminous notes of the journey and upon his return wrote a report of eight thousand words to the Governor, describing the country, the people, the route taken, and giving information which warranted the conclusion that the French were determined to possess the land. Governor Dinwiddie published the report and distributed it widely to arouse the people and encourage enlistment in a relief expedition. It was copied in nearly all the newspapers of the colonies and was later reprinted by the British Government, making the young man famous in Europe. The Governor organized two companies of militiamen, gave George Washington command of one, and ordered them off to contest title with the French. The orders were: "You are to use all expedition in proceeding to the Ford of Ohio with the men under command and there you are to finish and complete in the best manner and as soon as you possibly can, the Fort which I expect is there already begun by the Ohio Company. You are to act on the defensive but in case any attempts are made to obstruct the work or interrupt our settlement by any person

## ADDED EQUIPMENT

whatsoever, you are to restrain all such offenders and in case of resistance to make prisoners of or kill and destroy them."

It was easy to direct the formation of these companies and to issue instructions; but before they started it was decided that the exigency required a larger force, and six companies were authorized of fifty men each, with Colonel Frey in command.

Washington threw himself into the recruiting, organizing, drilling and training of men, the purchasing of supplies, accoutrements, horses, wagons, and all the things required to outfit the expedition. He soon had full knowledge of what and where to buy, the correct prices to pay, and the proper distribution. He bought most of the things himself and saw personally to quality and quantity. He, of all men, knew what was required to march an army over that hard and cruel journey, and he sought to provide well for the soldiers, although limited by an insufficient appropriation. In order to induce enlistments, Governor Dinwiddie issued a proclamation granting two hundred thousand acres of land on the Ohio, free of quit rent for fifteen years, to be divided among the officers and militiamen who would go on the expedition.

After all that Washington had done in organizing the force, with his superior knowledge of the course to be followed, and realizing the great responsibility upon him, he justly thought his rank as an officer in the enlarged

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force should be commensurate. Accordingly he wrote to Richard Corbin, a member of Dinwiddie's council, soliciting appointment as Lieutenant-Colonel, saying:

"The command of the whole forces is what I neither look for, expect or desire; for I must be impartial enough to confess, it is a charge too great for my youth and inexperience to be trusted with . . . I flatter myself, that, under a skillful commander, or man of sense (whom I most sincerely wish to serve under) with my application and diligent study of my duty, I shall be able to conduct my steps without censure, and, in time, render myself worthy of the promotion, that I shall be favored with now."

When the appointment came, he wrote his thanks to the Governor, saying: "I hope my future behavior will sufficiently testify the true sense I have of this kindness."

As the militia proceeded on its way, additional equipment had to be gathered from the frontiersmen, whom it was designated to protect. Under the military law of Virginia, the commander could impress provisions, boats, wagons, draft horses, utensils, tools, and the like, necessary to facilitate military movements and operations. But no article could be so impressed until its value had been appraised by two reputable persons under oath. A receipt was then given to the owner by the commanding officer. Washington was so anxious to reach the Monongahela that he was irritated at times by the formalities required by the

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law and could not abide dickering with the settlers. He was on business bent and proposed to accomplish it. Frequently he "strained the law" and then wrote the Governor to protect him. He urged the road builders forward, devising tools and ways for rapid clearing of underbrush, personally conducted the tree choppers, laid out the day's work, yet often was unable to make more than four miles a day. Waterways were investigated to see if progress by boat might be expedient. On May 18, 1754, at Great Crossing on the Youghiogheny, he writes the Governor:

"If I find this river is navigable, I am convinced it can but be agreeable to your Honor, building canoes in order to convey our artillery down. As the road to this place is made as good as it can be, having spent much time and great labor upon it, I believe wagons may travel now with 1500 to 1800 pounds weight on them, by doubling the teams at one or two pinches only."

Keen foresight had provided a supply of wampum for gaining the friendship of the Indians, as Washington was very meticulous in complying with the customs and conceits of the savages. Regarding this he writes the Governor:

"As I shall have frequent communications with the Indians which is of no effect without wampum, I hope your Honour will order some to be sent. Indeed we ought to



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have spirit, and many others things of this sort, which is always expected by every Indian that brings a message or good report. Also, the Chiefs, who visit and converse in council look for it. If it would not be thought too bold in me, I would recommend some of the treaty goods being sent for that purpose with or after Col. Frey. This is the method the French pursue, and a trifle judiciously bestowed, and in season, may turn to our advantage."

Before many days, it became apparent to the young commander,—for Colonel Frey had died before reaching his forces, and Washington had been made the colonel and placed in full command,—that his companies of militiamen were in no sense an army. They were made up largely of the floating, worthless element of the colony. The expedition was sent to check the French, but in the main it proved to be a body of men engaged in building a road to the Ohio country, the constructing of forts for the protection of the frontier, a survey of the land resources, and the placing of settlers on good farms as permanent outposts. Washington was engaged continually in the practical affairs connected with these matters. The army was, in fact, a body of day laborers fighting Mother Nature's effort to maintain primitive conditions.

The colonial authorities seemed to forget the expedition as soon as it had gone, and turned to the comforts of living, in the thought that Washington would carry the thing

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through somehow. He sought by frequent letters to overcome this lethargy, awaken an interest in their wandering workers and bring some recognition of what they were enduring for the stay-at-homes. He strongly sympathized with his men, whose hardships he shared: they were underpaid, underfed and lacked clothing: their work was hard, even for well-nourished bodies. Feeling humiliated by the situation, a letter went to Governor Dinwiddie:

“Let me serve voluntarily; then, I will, with the greatest pleasure in life, devote my services to the expedition without any other reward, than the satisfaction of serving my country; but to be slaving dangerously for the shadow of pay, through woods, rocks, mountains—I would rather prefer the great toil of a daily laborer, and dig for a maintenance, provided I were reduced to the necessity, than serve upon such ignoble terms; for I really do not see why the lives of his Majesty’s subjects in Virginia should be of less value than those in others parts of his American dominions; especially when it is well known that we undergo double their hardships. . . . We should be treated as gentlemen and officers and not have annexed to the most trifling pay that ever was given to English officers, the glorious allowance of soldier’s diet—a pound of pork, with bread in proportion, per day.”

The injustice of the pay, not only for himself but his men was continually presented to the colonial authorities.

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It was an appeal for fair dealing. This business principle of a just reward was thus early engendered and never disregarded in either his public or his private life thereafter.

The treatment received by him and his men on this expedition opened Washington's eyes to the fact that the officials of the mother country looked upon the colonials as menials who were unworthy of serious regard as soldiers. The English officers were totally unsympathetic and were densely ignorant of the situation. They considered military duty to be inconsistent with trail breaking and pioneering service.

The young Colonel knew he must, if possible, reach the Ohio and build a fort before the French could descend the river in the spring. Progress was made as fast as the obstructions of nature could be overcome. Many nights were spent ahead of his men, laying out the way for next day's travel and drawing maps and instructions. At last he reached Great Meadows, which he decided would be his final destination because the French were reported to be near. The soldiers threw up breastworks, erected palisades, and prepared for action. They called the place Fort Necessity, and the Colonel declared it was a "charming field for encounter." History has justified his choice for a battle, but "He thought the French would come up to him in open field," laughed a wily Indian. This was not the way the Indians and French were wont to fight. It was ambuscade, a bushwhacking sort of battle, which he was com-

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pelled to undergo. To this he was not accustomed, yet he stood his ground until his forces were exhausted and his ammunition gone; then, without hesitating, seeing it was futile further to prolong the engagement, he capitulated. The young commander did not care to see all his forces cut down, as he felt would be done, owing to the unequal conditions. He was permitted by the French to march away, leaving them in undisputed possession of the territory. He had made every effort possible to have additional forces, equipment, and supplies sent him.

In reporting his engagement with Jumonville, he said: "I heard the bullets whistling by me. Believe me, there is something charming in the sound." This led Horace Walpole to characterize him as a "brave braggart." It was, however, the mere expression of youthful exuberance, pride, and fearlessness.

The result of this failure inspired renewed effort in Governor Dinwiddie. Washington was not criticized, as his careful and insistent letters and reports had prepared the Virginian officials for just what happened. They recognized Washington's business foresight and came to his views too late. The situation was such that Governor Dinwiddie was compelled to set about organizing more companies of militia for another expedition. The French had to be driven away. Orders were issued for ten companies to be formed; but, on account of the repeated jealousies and disputes over the rank of officers, the Governor decreed that

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each company should be independent of the others and in the new army there should be no officers higher than a captain. This was contrary to Washington's idea of military organization, and he protested that it would not work; declaring also that he did not propose to be demoted from the rank of colonel to that of captain, when every petty officer with a King's commission would outrank him. Dinwiddie's scheme not only did not stop disputes but rendered the planning of a campaign impossible, as concentrated authority was absolutely lacking.

When Washington found that the Governor was obdurate, he resigned his commission. The rank, pay, and food proposed by the reorganization was unworthy a gentleman's acceptance. He retired to Mount Vernon, where he was distressingly needed, and began the systematic organization of his affairs and the land classifications which he perfected later.

Five months after returning to Mount Vernon, General Braddock appeared at the head of a small force of English Red Coats, under instructions to proceed against the French. The General and his soldiers came to America in gala attire, firm in the belief that the colonial militiamen were wholly inefficient, that their officers could not be trusted to lead an army or hold any place of rank, that only a guide was necessary to direct them to the place where they could meet the insolent French and their wild savage allies.

Peyton's "Reminiscences" of General Braddock contains

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a letter written to Braddock at Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1775, in which he asks: "Is Mr. Washington among your acquaintances? I recommend you to embrace the first opportunity to form his friendship. He is about twenty-three years of age, with a countenance both mild and pleasant, possessing both wit and judgment. He is of a comely and dignified demeanor, and at the same time displays much self reliance and decision. He strikes me as being a young man of extraordinary and exalted character, and is destined, I am of opinion, to make no inconsiderable figure in our country."

Because of this recommendation and others which soon reached the General, George Washington was solicited to accept a commission, but refused unless he was given the rank of major in equal standing with that officer under a King's commission. As this, under the situation at that time, could not be given him, General Braddock, who had become impressed with the need for the young colonial's services, offered him a place on the general staff, as aide-de-camp, which would eliminate the question of rank and place him as a personal adviser to the commanding general. This plan meeting all objections, Washington felt it his duty to accept the position, since it was evident that he was the only one who could guide the army. His letter of acceptance to General Braddock is full of the proud gentleman, conscious of his success and standing, feeling his equality with any British officer, and evincing a determina-

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tion that the General should fully understand and appreciate his qualifications, because his acceptance of the position was from purely patriotic motives. He refused all pay and had no expectation of reward. In a letter to a friend he says:

"I may be allowed to claim some merit, if it is considered that the sole motive which incites me to the field, is the laudable desire of serving my country, not to the gratification of my ambitions or lucrative plans. This, I flatter myself, will manifestly appear by my going as a volunteer without expectation of reward or prospect of obtaining a command, as I am confidently assured it is not in General Braddock's power to give me a commission that I would accept."

And again he writes:

"If there is any merit in my case, I am willing to hazard it among my friends, without the exposition of facts, as they might conceive that some advantages offered had engaged my services, when, in reality it is otherwise, for I expect to be a considerable loser in my private affairs by going."

Before starting westward, he writes his mother:

"The God to whom you commended me when I set out on a most perilous errand defended me from all harm and will do so again."

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The culmination of this campaign, so disastrous in American history, was due to the fact that so little advice was accepted by Braddock from Washington. So exalted was Braddock's idea of what he and his Red Coats could do, that he was unable to appreciate the value of a provincial adviser. History has related the sad story of how his army was literally cut to pieces, and the remnant saved only by the earnest efforts and cool head of the young Virginian.

This experience enlarged Washington's knowledge of military science and enabled him to appraise the English trooper as compared with the provincial, in actual warfare, to the advantage of the provincial. He was particularly distressed over the slipshod manner in which Braddock managed the business of the expedition. There was no system in his method of procuring and transporting supplies and army equipment. The English soldier would not cut trees or drag stones out of the roadway, as he did not wish to soil his uniform. It fell to Washington to organize the road gangs and to systematize the daily routine of travel and subsistence. The English officers fared sumptuously; they enjoyed leisure and the recounting of the heroics of the British soldier. It seemed to be considered by the English as merely a new jaunt, a sort of pleasure expedition from which they would soon return to their country to tell how they had saved the insignificant, raw, and suffering Virginians.

Braddock's defeat left the western country in the posses-



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sion of the French, and the road open toward Philadelphia. For three years thereafter the colonists were to feel the constant pressure of the advancing French and Indians. By their successes the Indians were learning to believe in the French and abandon the colonists.

After returning from this campaign, Washington in a letter to his brother Augustus thus sums up his experiences:

"I was employed to go a journey in the Winter, when I believe few or none would have undertaken it, and what did I get by it?—My expenses home! I was then appointed, with trifling pay, to conduct a handful of men to the Ohio. What did I get by that? Why, after putting myself to a considerable expense in equipping and providing necessaries for the campaign, I went out, was soundly beaten and lost all! Came in, and had my commission taken from me, or, in other words, my command reduced, under pretense of an order from home [England]. I then went out a volunteer with General Braddock, and lost all my horses and many other things. But this being a volunteer act, I ought not to mention it; nor should I have done it, were it not to show that I have been on the losing order ever since I entered the service, which is now nearly two years."

Nevertheless, during the next three years he was not idle, knowing that the colonists had come more and more to rely upon his knowledge, experience, and ability. He worked out plans for the organization of another army,

Dear Sir,

It would be the greatest pleasure

to

inform you that I have my Coat made by the following Instructions to be made as directed with a lapel <sup>in</sup> Breast the lapel to be buttoned each side is 18 inches. Below used to be about 5 to 6 inches wide all the way equal and to turn as the Breast of the Coat does. It has it made very long waisted and in length to come down to or below the waist of the knee the waist from the armpits to the side to be exactly as long or longer than from the neck to the bottom

We shall not to have more than one fold in the shirt and the top to be made just to turn in and three button. Below the lapel at the top to turn as the Cape of the Coat and bottom to come down with the button. Below the waist button hole in the Breast to be right opposite to the button on the side.

WASHINGTON'S DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS TO TAILOR FOR MAKING HIS COAT



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pleaded with the governors of the other colonies to approve a joint venture, sought to obtain appropriations from the Virginian House of Burgesses for supplies and ammunition, and strongly urged the colonists to submit to military service so that a sufficient force could meet the situation.

"His lack of success, the horror of skulking warfare, the constant swift and secret attacks, the hopeless task of heading off struggling bands of savages in a country of mountains and hollow ways covered with woods," transformed Washington, lessened his personal pride, mellowed his arrogance, and made him forget himself in the effort to save others. He was conscious of his power and fully believed in himself, but these cruel years wrought such a change in his character that we never again see in his career the element of strife for position or personal aggrandizement. His whole soul was centered on serving his countrymen—on fulfilling the trust which they reposed in him to find a way out. So great was the burden of his soul that he asserted:

"The supplicating tears of women, and moving petitions of men, melt me into such deadly sorrow that I solemnly declare, if I know my own mind, I could offer myself a willing sacrifice to the butchering enemy, provided that would contribute to the people's ease. . . . I would be a willing offering to savage fury, and die by inches to save a people."

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This is a new man speaking. Here is the key to his after-life. His manhood had blossomed and the perfume of its flower was human service. His soul was the soul of a great and suffering people.

Washington's emotions, however, never clouded his judgment; his attitude in the solution of problems was that of the business man seeking the facts from which a true course of action could be drawn. He saw clearly that the great obstacle in organizing and holding together the colonial army was the overbearing attitude of the English officers toward the militiamen. A King's commission was considered by an English officer superior to any commission from a mere colonial governor, and this obstacle must be removed if there was ever to be formed a compact fighting body of men. His persuasive powers and influence with the local British officials had failed. They recognized Washington almost as an equal and were eager to secure his cooperation, but would not extend this recognition farther than himself. The young officers of the militia were quitting the service and refusing to enlist where there was no hope of reward for heroic effort. It was now that Washington, the embodiment of colonial self-confidence, determined on a strategic move. In the early part of 1756 he went to Boston to present the situation in person to Governor Shirley, then commander-in-chief of the English forces. Fortunately Shirley, while an English officer, imbued with the inferiority of the colonials, was yet of such

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a broad mind that he could listen to reason. He had never really seen the embodiment of the colonial spirit until he met Washington.

In order to present the matter impressively to this ceremonial officer, Washington felt it necessary upon his visit to surround himself with all the dignity and pomp appertaining to the rank which he claimed as a gentleman and an officer. Woodrow Wilson, in his "Life of George Washington," thus describes his going: "He went forth dight in proper uniform of buff and blue, a white-and-scarlet cloak upon his shoulder, the sword at his side knotted with red and gold, his horse's fitting engraved with the Washington Arms, and trimmed in the best style of the London saddlers. With him rode two aides in their uniforms, and two servants in their white-and-scarlet livery. Curious folk who looked upon the celebrated officer upon the road saw him fare upon his way with all the pride of a Virginian gentleman, a handsome man, and an admirable horseman—a very gallant figure, no one could deny. Everywhere he was fêted as he went; everywhere he showed himself the earnest, high strung, achieving youth he was."

Shirley was soon won over and issued the requisite orders to establish clearly who should command in the new expedition, giving due recognition to the daring young Virginian by appointing him a colonel and placing under his orders Captain Dagworthy, who, having a King's commission, had been the real trouble breeder.

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The Virginian army was rapidly reorganized, and in 1758 Colonel Washington had the great satisfaction of commanding his first successful campaign. Fort Duquesne was recovered, and for a brief time the frontier was rendered safe from an advancing foe. A stroke of both economic and military genius was exhibited by the young commander, when he fitted out his soldiers and officers in Indian dress, which was their first uniform. He said the "dress" was unbecoming, but it was convenient and cheap, and it gave a feeling of unity to his men.

Returning again to Mount Vernon, he was permitted to remain only four weeks. The House of Burgesses voted money for an enlarged militia to strengthen the frontier lines and offered the generalship to Washington. He had matured ideas about the service and the new army, and his terms of acceptance were very definite. He demanded a voice in choosing the officers, a higher wage for the troops and more promptness in paying them, the adoption of better militia regulations, and a thorough reform in all departments handling supplies. These granted, he accepted and set about putting things in shape. The General selected locations for twenty-three forts, designed to protect the frontier for three hundred and fifty miles from the Potomac river to the border of North Carolina, drew the plans for each and largely directed their construction, visiting for that purpose many of these sites. All of this occupied sev-

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eral months, and resulted in making Virginia safe from further attacks.

For more than five years now, Washington had been engaged, ostensibly, in military service; but what he had been doing, was, in fact, administrative work—organizing and directing the business end of establishing peace and opening up a vast region. Now his military ambitions were gone. No mere colonial could obtain any higher station than he had gained under the existing British military system. Having served his country well, he had reached the highest public esteem and was a commanding figure in the commercial affairs of Virginia. Surrendering his commission, therefore, he went home to Mount Vernon to assume the heavy business obligations which had long been neglected, in the belief that he could lead thereafter the life of a planter and merchant. The business ability exhibited in his military service was a forecast of what he was to accomplish even more markedly in his private affairs.

Soldiering was not a money-making enterprise. The pay was not sufficient for his personal expenses, and he had freely spent his own money for food supplies for the soldiers. He returned to Mount Vernon almost penniless, as far as ready money was concerned, although he had coming to him about ten thousand acres of the bounty lands on the Ohio. During his absence, Mount Vernon was neglected and produced little more than what was required to meet the yearly payments to Lawrence's widow. About this time,



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however, the House of Burgesses voted him \$1500 for gallant services at the battle of Monongahela, which was most acceptable and in reality "put him on his feet."

One more task, however, was to be performed before Washington could devote his time to private affairs. At the close of the French War, he was made a Commissioner, charged with the arduous task of settling the military accounts of the colony, which were complicated and extensive, involving the pay of the soldiers in money and lands, the liquidation of supply bills, the checking of items to be included, and the prices to be paid. It was his intimate knowledge of these matters, coupled with his great sympathy for his companions in arms, which moved him to undertake the task. Every soldier felt sure of a square deal. The officers made him their agent and attorney to secure their respective allotments of land under the Dinwiddie Proclamation of 1754. He spent nine weeks on a trip to the Ohio basin to select the best lands for the bounty distribution and in making the allotments. This trip enabled him to study further the Indian situation and the possibilities for colonization and the development of agriculture and industries in this new country. He made extensive notes of these matters, not overlooking the character of the soil, the timber, game, and usable rivers. Thus it was, that he became more familiar than anyone in the colonies with the geography, the commercial and industrial possibilities, and the life of the inhabitants of the vast region west of the Alleghenies.

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This knowledge and vision formed the background of his subsequent labors to retain the region in the Union and enabled him to formulate and promulgate the Land and Indian policies of the government, when he became President.

Many of the militiamen did not want land which required location, surveying, recording of title and, when finally secured, was hundreds of miles away from their old haunts; so Washington, from time to time, bought their warrants, thus obtaining in addition to the ten thousand acres which was his share as commander, about forty thousand acres along the Ohio and on toward the present location of Pittsburgh. It took him thirteen years to compel the British Government to make good Governor Dinwiddie's promise and to secure justice to the veterans in confirming these allotments. These holdings, together with what he had already acquired, made him a substantial land owner, independent of any inheritance, and started him on his career of buying and selling real estate, which ever afterwards was a large factor in his business success.

Woodrow Wilson, summing up Washington's experiences at this time, well says: "The clerical side of business he had learned very thoroughly in camp, as well as the exceeding stir and strain of individual effort—the incessant letter writing necessary to keep promised performance afoot, the reckoning of men and stores, the nice calculation of time and ways and means; the scrutiny of individual men, too,

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which is so critical a part of management, and the slow organization of effort; he had been in a fine school for these things all his youth, and would have thought shame to himself not to have learned temperance, sagacity, thrift, and patience wherewith to use his energy."

An intimate, personal touch with the young General about this time is obtained from the taste exhibited in his mode of dressing. He realized the value of good attire and had a desire for the simple, yet elegant, in personal apparel. Here is his idea of a coat:

"Memorandum: To have my coat made by the following directions: To be made a frock with a lapel breast; the lapel to contain on each side six buttonholes, and to be 5 or 6 inches wide all the way equal, and to turn as the breast of the coat does; to have it made very long waisted and in length to come down or below the bent of the knee; the waist from the armpit to the fold to be exactly as long or longer than from thence to the bottom; not to have more than one fold in the skirt and the top to be made just to turn in, and three buttonholes; the lapel at the top to turn as the cape of the coat, and button to come parallel with the buttonholes; the last buttonhole in the breast to be right opposite to the button on the hip."

Later, in writing to his London tailor, he said: "I want neither lace nor embroidery. Plain clothes, with a gold or silver button (if worn in genteel dress) are all I desire."

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He was careful that the material, taste and fit should be the best. " 'Twas a point of pride with the Virginians to know how to dress, both well and in fashion."

Nature had endowed him with a fine physique, a winning personality, courage and sincerity, which, with his mental development resulting from his contact with the big problems of the day, private business responsibilities and a growing knowledge of the economic and social conditions of the people, made him at twenty-six a dominant figure in the South. Professor Herbert B. Adams says that even if the Revolution had not occurred, Washington would have become the most active and representative spirit in American affairs.

He had the surveyor's attitude of mind, and he possessed common sense rather than brilliancy, business rather than literary ability; he reached his judgments over a pragmatic highway.

The responsibilities thrown upon him and his ready acceptance of them; his steady, unswerving, intelligent carriage of all duties; the grueling war experiences fretfully borne at first and then calmly endured, all worked a marvelous growth in the young man's mind and character. They broadened him to a full comprehension of the strength and weakness of the colonial system. They disclosed a wide difference between the attitudes of the mother country and her offspring towards human rights.

## CHAPTER III

### REALTY ACTIVITIES

WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER, answering Thackeray's charge, reechoed by recent impressionistic biographers, that Washington married Martha Custis on January 5, 1759, for monetary reasons only, says truly: "I believe he would have married a poor girl out of the workhouse, if he had really loved her." Washington was susceptible to feminine charm, even attempted in his younger days lyric rhymes, and had, contrary to general belief, a goodly mixture of sentiment in his nature. He loved Martha Custis, and no eager searcher for infidelity to her has been rewarded. Their happy life disproves the suggestion that he was a fortune hunter.

Daniel Parke Custis left his widow and two children,—“Patsy,” four, and “Jack,” six,—about 15,000 acres of land, 200 negroes and \$100,000 in cash, mortgages, and stock in the Bank of England. The widow's one-third of the personalty, about \$33,334, came to Washington, as the common law regarded husband and wife as one, the one being the husband. He was made the guardian of the children, who inherited equally the real estate and negroes, subject to a one-third interest of the mother in the net proceeds during

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her life. All the love and care of a real father were lavished upon these children. A report to the court was made each year of his administration of their estate, but no charge was ever made by the administrator for his services.

His accounts were kept in a "marble colour'd folio book," unfortunately lost. The minuteness of his records is illustrated by a cash entry in a report on August 21, 1772: "Charge Miss Custis with a hair pin mended by C. Turner, one shilling."

The daughter died in 1773 at eighteen years of age, and one-half of her estate, which was her mother's inheritance, passed to Washington. The son, John Parke Custis, lived for many years to cause unending trouble and embarrassment, for he was wild and unresponsive to his step-father's solicitude. Nevertheless his estate of many thousands of acres, scattered over Virginia and Maryland, was ever carefully guarded and preserved, so that in seventeen years it was made to double in value. When he became of age, Mrs. Washington and the General released their dower right in the son's lands for an annuity of £525 during Mrs. Washington's life. When, by reason of Washington's part in the Revolutionary War, the loss of Jack's interest in the Bank of England stock seemed imminent, Washington voluntarily took it over, giving Jack good American securities amounting to £1650, instead, so that the loss, if the Revolution failed, would be borne by Washington.

Mrs. Washington was evidently content to leave all busi-

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ness affairs to her husband. One of his memorandum entries in the book of accounts reads: "By cash to Mrs. Washington for Pocket Money, four pounds." The economic independence of a wife was not then an issue.

With the added fortune of his wife and the income from his own lands, he began buying more land and developing his ideas of systematic agriculture. For several years, during his spare moments, he had been studying agriculture and soil chemistry in order to make his farming more profitable and to develop the industry to a higher plane than it had occupied in the minds of the colonial planters. Farming was to him a business based on scientific principles. In the course of a few years 7500 acres were acquired adjoining and near Mount Vernon. In 1771 he was paying perpetual ground rent of two shillings and sixpence per one hundred acres upon 5580 acres in Fairfax County; 2898 acres in Frederick County; 1250 acres in King George County; 240 acres in Hampshire; 275 acres in Loudon, and 2682 acres in Fauquier—in all 12,925 acres. He had 3250 acres under cultivation at one time.

Part of the western lands Washington owned were surveyed and classified and their colonization started. Captain William Crawford, who had been with him in the French and Indian wars, was employed to hunt out good lands on the Ohio river, in West Virginia, and in western Pennsylvania that might be purchased. The British King had issued an edict in 1763 against granting any patents for

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land west of the Alleghenies to any person, prohibiting even purchases from the Indians. Washington declared this act a "smothering of progress." Consequently, desiring to avoid publicity regarding any transactions of Crawford, he writes him that "all this may be avoided by a silent management and the operation carried on by you under the guise of hunting game, which you may, I presume, effectually do, at the same time you are in pursuit of land." This secrecy was enjoined because, "I might be censured for the opinion I have given in respect to the King's proclamation."

So convinced was he that the western and southern lands would be thrown open to settlers and thus offered good speculative opportunities, that in 1763 he organized the Mississippi Company, writing the Articles of Incorporation himself, which are preserved in the Congressional Library. The purpose was to acquire a million acres in the Mississippi valley, obtaining if possible a grant from the Crown. Considerable of the capital stock was sold to friends, and locations were made; but the company was informed that no patents would issue as the land was reserved for grants to the English gentry. Washington struggled from 1765 to 1772 in competition with London influence for royal favor, without success. The Revolution ended the enterprise, the shareholders received no return, Washington lost £27.13.5, and the hopes of the London "grandees" were blasted.

In 1767 he purchased three thousand acres, "a fine piece of land on a stream called Charters Creek," southwest of



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Pittsburg, for about two cents per acre. One thousand two hundred acres on the Youghiogheny River, near Pittsburg, were bought, which were underlaid by a coal deposit that he thought "to be of the very best kind, burning freely an abundance of it." These lands have long proven his foresight and are now worth many millions of dollars.

He purchased the claim of John Posey and Reverend Dr. Thurston in West Florida and wrote to the Governor of Florida to pick the best lands for him. James Wood, who was traveling in Florida, was asked to find good lands, "easy to be obtained and not difficult to keep under the established rules of government," being willing to take as much as 25,000 acres. There is no record of any purchases on Wood's recommendation.

In order to develop his western lands, a partnership was formed with one Gilbert Simpson, who platted, cleared, and sold locations to settlers. They built the first grist mill west of the Allegheny mountains on Washington river, a stream emptying into the Youghiogheny. Washington considered very seriously bringing over Palatinate Germans as settlers, according to letters written to David Wollpen, also he thought of Irish and Scotch, but the Revolutionary War upset his plans. He did, however, send to Simpson laborers and settlers and the partnership proved fairly profitable. In the Maryland and Baltimore *Journal* of August 20, 1773, is found an advertisement for the sale of 20,000 acres, signed by Washington. It is worth presenting here in full as a

## REALTY ACTIVITIES

model for modern realtors in its candor, fairness, and sincerity.

“MOUNT VERNON IN VIRGINIA, July 15, 1773.

“The subscriber having obtained Patents for upwards of twenty thousands acres of land on the Ohio and Great Kanhawas (ten thousand of which are situated on the banks of the first mentioned river, between the mouths of the two Kanhawas, and the remainder on the Great Kanhawa, or New River from the mouth, or near it, upwards in one continued survey) proposes to divide the same into any sized tenements that may be desired, and lease them upon moderate terms, allowing a reasonable number of years rent free, provided, within the space of two years from next October, three acres for every fifty contained in each lot, and proportionately for a lesser quantity, shall be cleared, fenced and tilled; and that by or before the time limited for the commencement of the first rent, five acres for every hundred, and proportionately as above, shall be enclosed and laid down in good grass meadow; and moreover that at least fifty good fruit trees for every like quantity of land shall be planted on the premises. Any person inclined to settle on these lands may be more fully informed of the terms by applying to the subscriber, near Alexandria, or in his absence, to Mr. Lund Washington; and would do well in communicating their intentions before the 1st of October next, in order that a sufficient number of lots may be laid

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

off to answer the demand. As these lands are among the first which have been surveyed in the part of the country they are in, it is almost needless to promise that none can exceed them in luxurance of soil, or convenience of situation, all of them lying upon the banks either of the Ohio or Kanhawa, and abounding with fine fish and wild fowl of various kinds, as also in most excellent meadows, many of which (by the bountiful hand of nature) are, in their present state, almost fit for the scythe. From every part of these lands water carriage is now had to Fort Pitt, by an easy communication; and from Fort Pitt, up the Monongahela, to Redstone, vessels of burthen, may and do pass continually; from whence, by means of Cheat River, and other navigable branches of the Monongahela, it is thought the portage to Potommack may, and will, be reduced within the compass of a few miles, to the great ease and convenience of the settlers in transporting the produce of their lands to market. To which may be added, that as patents have actually passed the seals for the several tracts here offered to be leased, settlers on them may cultivate and enjoy the lands in peace and safety, notwithstanding the unsettled counsels respecting a new colony on the Ohio; and as no right money is to be paid for these lands, and quitrent of two shillings sterling a hundred, demandable some years hence only, it is highly presumable that they will always be held upon a more desirable footing than where both these are laid on with a very heavy hand. And it may not be amiss fur-





## REALTY ACTIVITIES

ther to observe, that if the scheme for establishing a new government on the Ohio, in the manner talked of, should be affected, these must be among the most valuable lands in it, not only on account of the goodness of the soil, and the other advantages above enumerated, but for their contiguity to the seat of government, which more than probable will be fixed at the mouth of the Great Kanhawa."

The results of this selling campaign were not large. Nevertheless Washington bought more land, sure in his mind that the sale day would come; but it was ten years before he again actively tried to dispose of these lands.

In May 1774, he advertised that he had sent out carpenters and laborers to clear and enclose this land and build houses on which he would give "leases for lives, renewable forever."

In 1775 Washington sent another group of workmen to his western land to plant corn and watermelons, cucumbers, and "every kind of seed." He wrote his agent: "After you have got a place enclosed, try and buy me all the buffalo calves you can get, and make them as gentle as possible. I would not stick at any reasonable price for them, especially the cow calves but I should like at least two bull calves for fear of accidents, as I am very anxious to raise a breed of them."

Every enterprise of any merit sought to obtain his name in connection with it, as the name meant as much, if not

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more, than money. It bespoke honesty and brought the confidence of investors. He was ever ready to become interested in any venture which would develop lands and make for public gain, while giving profit to private capital. Large undertakings appealed to him, for he liked to do big things, and he did become actively connected with several great enterprises. One of these was the Great Dismal Swamp, organized by William and Thomas Nelson, Robert Burwell, John Robinson, Thomas Walker, Fielding Lewis, Anthony Bacon & Co., J. Lynne, Samuel Gist, Robert Tucker, William Walters, and George Washington, to drain by canals the lands of the Great Dismal Swamp, lying below Norfolk in Nansemond County, Virginia. Washington was the managing director of this concern from 1763 to 1768. Many years previously William Byrd had reported that this swamp when drained would leave very fertile land, and a water-way from it would carry products from Albermarle Sound into the Nansemond and Elizabeth rivers. The expense had daunted effort until Washington visited the swamp in 1763, made a survey, and induced the General Assembly of Virginia to pass an act empowering the adventurers, as the organizers were called, "to enter upon, and have a free passage and make such canals or causeways through the lands of any person whatsoever adjacent to the said Dismal Swamp, as may be conducive to the more effectual draining thereof, without being subject to the action or suit of any such person for the same."

## REALTY ACTIVITIES

A substantial sum of money was raised, and the Company bought 40,000 acres of the best land in the vicinity of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Suffolk. The twelve directors, men of business prominence and wealth, turned operations over to Washington upon the plans outlined by him. He saw to the digging of many miles of ditches and canals; constructed and maintained roads and camps, as well as yards and docks at Suffolk; superintended the cutting and shipping to England of many loads of lumber; and personally handled a large force of workmen. The enterprise was so successful that Washington estimated his interest, in 1793, to be worth £5,000. In 1795 he sold his two twenty-one parts interest to General Henry Lee for \$20,000, in three equal annual installments with six per cent interest, but Lee failed to complete his payments. Washington's executors collected dividends on this investment from 1810 to 1825, amounting to \$18,815.16, and then sold for \$12,100.

In association with Thomas Walpole, Benjamin Franklin, John Sargent, and Samuel Wharton, a petition was made to the English Government for a large grant of land in the Ohio valley to be sold to settlers and traded to the Indians, but the war put an end to the scheme, which is known as the Walpole Grant. Afterwards Washington obtained 200,000 acres of this land for distribution to the Virginia officers and soldiers for their French and Indian War services.



## CHAPTER IV

### MOUNT VERNON FARMER

THE ambition of a typical Virginian was a comfortable home surrounded by a large acreage of rich land. Whether, by association with the Fairfaxes and with his brother Lawrence, Washington was imbued with the idea of being a substantial planter and farmer, or whether it was inherent in his nature, we know his deepest desire was for such a career, not on the prevailing hand-to-mouth basis, but in a large business way. He once said: "The life of the husbandman, of all others, is the most delightful. It is honourable, it is amusing, and with judicious management, it is profitable." In referring to agriculture in the States later in his life, he says:

"Nothing, in my opinion, would contribute more to the welfare of the States, than the proper management of lands. Nothing in Virginia, particularly, seems to me to be less understood. The present mode of cropping, practiced among us, is destructive to landed property, and must, if persisted in much longer, ultimately ruin the holders of it."

Every acre which Washington owned he sought to make profitable, constantly studying and experimenting to dis-

## MOUNT VERNON FARMER

cover ways and means to that end. He was exceedingly proud of Mount Vernon and its possibilities. In 1793, he writes to Arthur Young:

"No estate in United America is more pleasantly situated than this. It lies in a high, dry, and healthy country, 300 miles by water from the sea, and, as you will see by the plan, on one of the finest rivers in the world. Its margin is washed by more than ten miles of tide water; from the beds of which and the innumerable coves, inlets, and small marshes, with which it abounds, an inexhaustible fund of mud may be drawn as a manure, either to be used separately or in a compost. . . .

"The soil of the tract of which I am speaking is a good loam, more inclined, however, to clay than sand. From use, and I might add, abuse, it is become more and more consolidated and of course heavier to work. . . .

"This river, which encompasses the land the distance above mentioned, is well supplied with various kinds of fish at all seasons of the year; and, in the spring, with great profusion of shad, herring, bass, carp, perch, sturgeon, etc. Several fisheries appertain to the estate; the whole shore, in short, is one entire fishery."

His pride of ownership was coupled with an obligation to make it produce to its utmost. After a careful survey, the estate was divided into five farms, named, respectively, the Mansion House Farm, the Union Farm, the Dogue Run

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Farm, Muddy Hole Farm, and the River Farm. Each of these farms had its particular characteristics, the division being very accurately and scientifically worked out. A sufficient number of workers was apportioned among them; an overseer was appointed for each farm, to whom was given specific directions, and weekly reports were required, minutely describing conditions. These reports Washington carefully considered, giving personal supervision to each farm. During his residence at Mount Vernon prior to and after the War, he rode daily over these farms, so that he might have personal knowledge with which to check up the reports of his overseers.

The so-called Agricultural Revolution in England, particularly from 1777 to 1790, when the government established the Board of Agriculture with Arthur Young as its secretary, was of keen interest to Washington. It produced a whole new literature of agriculture. He tried to keep informed concerning the development in better agriculture which was constantly being made by scientific farmers and by the agricultural societies which sprang up over England and Scotland. A constant correspondence with Arthur Young and others was carried on. Through a friend in England, who was a member of the "Bath and West of England Society," a notable agricultural organization dating from 1777, to whom he appealed, and with the assistance of his own London Agent, Wakelin Welch, Esq., one James Bloxham, a Scotchman, was sent over as "a director or

## MOUNT VERNON FARMER

superintendent" of the Mount Vernon farms. Bloxham had been in charge of the extensive farming operations of William Peacey of North Leach, Gloucestershire, who was one of the leading gentlemen-farmers. In Washington's diaries are references to "my farmer." On Monday, May 19, 1786, is the entry "agreed this day with James Bloxham, who arrived here the (21st) day of April from England to live with and superintend my farming business upon the terms mentioned in a specific agreement in writing." This agreement, written by the employer, is an interesting exhibit of his business acumen and "legal mind."

"ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT entered into this 31st day of May in the year of 1786 between George Washington Esqr. of the County of Fairfax and Commonwealth of Virginia of the one part, and James Bloxham, lately from the Shire of Gloucester in the Kingdom of England, farmer, of the other part, Witnesseth that the said James Bloxham for and in consideration of the wages, Allowances, and privileges hereinafter mentioned, doth agree with and oblige himself to serve, the said George Washington for the space of one year; to commence the first day of the present month, in the capacity of a Farmer and Manager of such parts of Husbandry as shall be committed to his charge; and will, to the utmost of his skill and abilities, order and direct the same (with the approbation of the said George Washington) to the best advantage.—That he will at all times, and upon

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all occasions, suggest such plans for the improvement of the said Washington's farms, and the stock of Horses, Cattle, Sheep, Hogs, &c. which are on them as to him shall appear most conducive to his interest,—Will keep regular Accts of the said stock—and will strictly observe and follow all such orders and directions as he shall, from time to time receive from his said employer; for this and for other purposes. That when thereunto required, he will buy, at the expense of the said Washington, Cattle, or Sheep for feeding, or for store; and will dispose of the same or any others, to the best advantage; attending particularly to the care and management of the Stock of every kind, both in Winter & Summer—as well those for the use and benefit of the farms, and for family consumption, as those which may be fatted for the Market—That he will use his utmost endeavors to encrease and properly distribute the Manure on the farms; and also will improve to the best of his judgment, the implements of husbandry necessary thereto—and will instruct, as occasion may require, and opportunities offer, the labourers therein how to Plow, Sow, Mow, Reap, Thatch, Ditch, Hedge &c. in the best manner.—And generally, that he will consider the said Washington's interest as his own, and use his true endeavor to promote it accordingly. In consideration whereof, the said George Washington doth agree to pay the said James Bloxham Fifty Guineas for his year's Services, to be compleated on the first day of May, 1787; and will allow him, the said Blox-

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ham, ten Guineas besides, towards defraying the expences of bringing his wife and family to this Country.—That when they shall have arrived, he will provide him, & them, a decent and comfortable House to reside in, by themselves; will lend them two Cows for Milk—a Sow to raise Pigs for their own eating (but not to sell) and give them as much Bran as is sufficient to brew Beer for his family's use.—And moreover, will allow them for the part of the year which remain after the arrival of his family and leaving his present board, at the rate of Six hundred pounds of Pork and Beef, and Eight hundred pounds of Middling flour, per annum:—and likewise a piece of ground sufficient for a Garden and firewood.—The said George Washington also agrees to provide the said James Bloxham with a horse to ride on for the purpose of superintending the business herein required—or, if the said Bloxham shall find his own horse, to allow pasturage, & reasonable feed for him.—Lastly it is agreed between the said George Washington and James Bloxham, that if the said James Bloxham shall not return to England at the expiration of the year for which he now engages, and his conduct shall be such as to merit the approbation of the said George Washington, that then and in those cases, his wages for the next year shall be Sixty Guineas; and the other allowances and priviledges the same as the present year. In testimony of all and each of these Articles, and for the full and perfect compliance therewith, the parties to these presents hath interchangeably set their hands and seals, and

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

to the other, doth bind himself in the sum of One Hundred pounds Currnt money of Virginia, the day and year first written.

GO. WASHINGTON (Seal)

Signed, Sealed &ca  
in the present of  
GEO. WASHINGTON."

JAMES BLOXHAM (Seal)

Bloxham brought the best expert advice of the times. From correspondence with Young and others, it appears that Washington and his farmer had serious differences occasionally over agricultural problems, and the diary entries indicate that the farmer's opinion and direction usually prevailed. Bloxham never could abide the negroes, but continued in the employment until June 1791, when he bought some land and became an independent land owner and farmer.

According to the agreement, Mrs. Bloxham and her two children came over, bringing with them certain seeds and "implements of husbandry." Among them were plows, which Bloxham had written her must be "light and Deasant" for he was disgusted with the work of heavy plows in the "light loam" he was dealing with.

The prevailing crop of that day was tobacco, and because of lost records we are unable to ascertain the extent of Washington's tobacco business. But we know that it was extensive, because in 1761 he shipped 19,173 pounds on the ship

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*Bland*, consigned to his London Agents, Robert Cary Company; 12,783 pounds on the *Sarah*, and 18,884 pounds on the *Argo*, to the same agent; 5846 pounds on the *Phoenix* to Richard Washington; and had 8351 pounds left in his warehouse. In March 1763, he counted on his Bridge Quarter farm 110,000 "holes" of corn and 81,158 hills of tobacco. This counting of "holes" and hills was his way of estimating in advance his crop, as he kept account of the number of seeds and plants in each hole or hill. Digressing to illustrate his method, we find him one Sunday, when alone at home, counting the number of seeds in a pint of the following:

|  |      |
|--|------|
| "Small round pease, commonly called Gentlemen's Peas | 3144 |
| Those brot from yo. River by Major G. Washington     | 2268 |
| Do. Those brot. from Mrs. Dangerfield's              | 1375 |
| Those given by Hezh. Fairfax                         | 1330 |
| Large, and early black eye Pease                     | 1486 |
| Bunch hominy Beans                                   | 1473 |

"Accordingly," he writes, "a bushel of the above, allowing 5 to a hill, will plant the number of hills wch. follow, viz:

|          |        |          |        |
|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| 1st kind | 40,243 | 4th kind | 17,024 |
| 2 Ditto  | 29,030 | 5 Ditto  | 15,180 |
| 3 Ditto  | 17,200 | 6 Ditto  | 18,854 |

Again, in January 1787, he says he ascertained how many of the following sorts of seeds there are in a pound Troy, the weight of a bushel of each, and how much an acre it will take to sow each kind, and makes the following table:



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| Sorts<br>of<br>Seeds | Number of<br>Grains |                 | Propn<br>of<br>Chaff<br>in ea. | Weight<br>of a<br>bush.<br>of<br>each<br>seed | Seeds for One Acre     |                 |                         |                 |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
|                      | In the lb.          | In the<br>bush. |                                |   | At<br>4 inches<br>Sqr. |                 | At<br>12 inches<br>Sqr. |                 |
|                      |                     |                 |                                |   | Lbs.                   | galls           | Lbs.                    | galls           |
| Red Clover           | 71,000              | 4,863,500       | $\frac{1}{80}$                 | 68 $\frac{1}{2}$                              | 5 $\frac{3}{8}$        | 0 $\frac{5}{8}$ |                         |                 |
| Timothy              | 298,000             | 13,410,000      | $\frac{1}{13}$                 | 45  | 1 $\frac{2}{8}$        | 0 $\frac{7}{8}$ |                         |                 |
| New River Grass      | 844,800             | 8,448,000       | $\frac{1}{14}$                 | 10  | 0 $\frac{7}{8}$        | 0 $\frac{7}{8}$ |                         |                 |
| Orchd. Grass         | 387,000             | 4,459,700       | $\frac{1}{8}$                  | 11 $\frac{1}{2}$                              | 1                      | 0 $\frac{7}{8}$ |                         |                 |
| Eastn. Shore Pea.    | 14,400              | 964,800         | $\frac{1}{80}$                 | 67  |                        |                 | 3                       | $\frac{3}{64}$  |
| Bl:eye Pease         | 2,300               | 140,300         | $\frac{1}{82}$                 | 61  |                        |                 | 18 $\frac{7}{8}$        | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ |
| Crowder do.          | 1,600               | 97,600          | $\frac{1}{84}$                 | 61  |                        |                 | 27 $\frac{3}{8}$        | 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ |
| Barley               | 8,925               | 455,695         | $\frac{1}{87}$                 | 51  | 44                     | 7               |                         |                 |

His tobacco brought the highest price in the Virginia market, which centered in Alexandria; but tobacco was very exhausting to the ground, and the current practice of resting the soil by letting it lie unused for a year or two after a crop appeared to Washington as wasteful and unprofitable; so, after trying to alternate the tobacco crop with grain without satisfactory results, he decided his land was more valuable for wheat and practically ceased tobacco raising. He was also led to this conclusion by the fact that the tobacco market was uncertain, while the wheat and flour demand was increasing and prices were steadily advancing. In 1774 he states that there were twenty-five hogsheads of tobacco in a warehouse in Alexandria, which he had held there four or five years waiting a higher market price. In 1789 he provided in his contracts with tenants that only enough tobacco

## MOUNT VERNON FARMER

should be raised as was "needed for chewing and smoaking in his own family."

Centering his attention then upon the raising of wheat, the ambitious farmer obtained the best seed from friends in England and read all the treatises he could secure on the culture of that grain. A series of experiments and observations were conducted in a "hot house" of his own designing, to ascertain the best soil conditions for a maximum crop. Under date of April 14, 1760, we have this diary entry:

"Mixed my composts in a box with ten apartments in the following manner, viz. No. 1 is three pecks of earth brought from below the hill out of the 47 acre field without any mixture. In No. 2 is two pecks of sand earth and one of marle taken out of the said field, which marle seemed a little inclined to sand. 3 has 2 pecks of sd. earth and 1 of river sand.

4 has a peck of Horse Dung;

5 has mud taken out of the creek;

6 has Cow dung

7 has marle from the Gulleys on the hillside, wch. seemed to be purer than the others;

8 sheep dung

9 Black mould from the Gulleys on the hillside, wch. seemed to be purer than the other.

10 Clay got just below the garden;

All mixed with the same quantity and sort of earth in the

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most effectual manner by reducing the whole to a tolerable degree of fineness and jumbling them well together on a cloth.

In each of these divisions were planted three grains of wheat, 3 of oats, and as many of Barley—all at equal distances in Rows, and of equal depth [done by machine made for the purpose].

The wheat rows are next the numbered side, the oats in the middle and the barley on that side next the upper part of the garden.

Two or three hours after sowing in this manner, and about an hour before Sunset I watered them all equally alike with water that had been standing in a tub abt. two hours exposed to the sun."

A further experiment was made to find the best manner of plowing, harrowing, and seeding, which was conducted on a forty-acre plot of "partly new and partly old ground." He says: "This was done to see what method was best, that is, whether the wheat would thrive better in the one way than the other, and whether the land was not preserved more by harrowing than lying in Furrows."

Pioneering in the raising of wheat as well as all other crops was necessary because of the lack of intelligent farming in the colony. Relying upon his judgment as the result of study and experimentation, Washington developed famous wheat fields and unprecedented yields of grain.

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With equal care he systematized the harvesting so as to eliminate waste of grain and man-power. The plan was:

“1st. To make every plantation, or farm, take care of its own grain witht. uniting their hands.

“2nd. To increase the number of cradlers at each; to such a number only, as will give two rakers to each, and leave a sufficiency besides to gather and put the wheat into shocks, and generally speaking, with negro labourers, the following distribution may be found to come as near the mark in wheat made in corn ground, as any, viz. for every two cradlers to allow 4 rakes, 1 shocker, and two carriers—for the last of which boys and girls are competent.

“3rd. To give the cradlers a start of two days of the rakers and shockers; letting them begin to cut as soon as milk leaves the grain, and before it becomes hard and flinty, leaving the grain this time in the swarth, for the straw to cure, before it is raked, bound and put into shocks.

“4th. To order and see that the cradlers cut slow, and lay their grain regular and well; after it is cut low and clear; which will be found more advantageous than to hurry over the grd. in order to put an end to harvest, as is usual. By beginning early time will be allowed for these, especially as wheat cut in this state yields much easier, and pleasanter to the stroke, and can be laid much better than when the straws get dry and harsh.

“5th. By giving this start to the cradlers, the straw (as hath been observed before) will be sufficiently cured to bind

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and shock and it must be seen that the Rakers also do their work clean and well, which is more likely to be the case without particular attention, than when one half their time they are scampering after the cutters to keep up; and the other half are standing whilst the cradlers are whetting their scythes, drinking and talking.

“6th. Each Raker must take a swarth and not two go in one, that the authors of bad work may be more easily detected. By this mode of proceeding the raking and binding will be done with more ease, regularity and dispatch, because it becomes a sober, settled work, there being no pretext for hurrying at one time, and standing at another, But,

“7th. By this means, I am persuaded that the number of rakers which usually follow cradlers, would, by the middle of harvest, or by the time the grain is in condition to shock as it comes from the cradle, be fully up with them, and then might go in together if it should be conceived best.”

“Admitting that the grain can be cut with safety as soon as it comes out of the milky state the advantages here described, added to the superior quality of the straw for fodder, and indeed for any other purpose, greatly overbalance any inconveniences which may result from the practice, and which must lay chiefly, if not wholly, in these:

“1st. The hazard of a heavy heating rain, which may settle the swarth among the stubble so as to make it bad to rake, and difficult perhaps to get up clean; and

“2nd. Lighter rains and Dews which may interrupt the

1301  
Monday Ap. 14. -

Fine warm day, Wind  
N. and clear till the evening,  
when it clouded;

N. Fish were to be  
caught to day neither. -

Mixed mud Composts in  
a box with ten Apartments  
in the following manner  
viz - in N<sup>o</sup>. 1 is three pecks  
of the Earth brought from  
below the Gill out of the  
46 acre Field without any  
mixture - in N<sup>o</sup>.

2. is two pecks of the said  
Earth and one of Marle  
taken out of the said Field  
which Marle seems a  
little Inclined to Sand

3 Has. 2 Pecks of F<sup>o</sup>. Earth  
and 1 of Riverside Sand

Δ. Has a Peck of Horse Dung

5. Has waste taken out  
of the loach. -

6 Has Cow Dung. -

7 Marle from the Jolly  
on the side side N. seen  
to be purer than the other.

8 Sheep Dung. -

9. Black Mould taken  
out of the Pecora on  
the Creek side. -

10 Clay got just below  
the Jolly. -

All mixed with the same  
quantity of good Earth  
in the most effectual  
manner by reducing  
the whole to a solid whole  
degree of firmness &  
putting them wet together  
in a cloth

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Extract from diary, showing manner of mixing composts for most  
effectual fertilizing.

[See page 77]



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binding, the straw not drying so soon in swarths as it does standing, nor can be meddled with so early in the morning generally. But as neither rain or dew will hurt the grain (on the contrary will make it thresh easier, and do very little injury to the straw), and as there is always work enough on the plantation to employ the hands (such as succouring and hoeing of corn, pulling flax, weeding of vines, Pease, etca., etca.) supposing the interruptions above mentioned to happen, no labour need be lost, because, as each harvest will be managed by the hands belonging to the farm or plantation, they can without inconvenience (having their tools always at hand) shift from one kind of work to another without preparation or fitting themselves for it."

There was a decline in the demand for American wheat in England after the War, and trade generally was demoralized; so Washington, in order to get the largest income from wheat, decided to convert it into flour, which required the building of his own flour mills, operated by water power, and also a cooperage plant to make the needed barrels. Personal supervision was given to the whole process from the planting of the grain to the loading of the filled homemade barrels on shipboard. The flour was carefully improved by experiments in the milling until there was produced what Washington advertised as a "Superfine" product. By correspondence with flour merchants everywhere and particularly in the West Indies, which he believed the readiest market



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and where he appointed agents, he established his Class "A" flour in the markets of the trading world, and it passed without inspection at West India ports when marked "George Washington, Mount Vernon." He became the largest flour producer and merchant in the colonies, operating three mills turning out three grades of flour, and for a time, outside of land deals, derived his main income from this business. It is said that he attempted to manufacture a ship-biscuit, but details are lacking.

Realizing that the soil could not furnish sustenance to the same crop year after year, he became obsessed with the crop rotation theory, being perhaps the first real experimenter in America in this line. Agriculturists in England had successfully demonstrated the idea, and Bloxham, no doubt, introduced the practice. Many notes on the subject and tables showing what crops should alternate in each field are left to us in Washington's handwriting. Whenever Washington learned of a plant likely to be profitable, it was secured, planted, and studied. He was the first one in America to cultivate lucerne, now known as alfalfa. On March 24, 1760, a diary entry states:

"In the evening, in a Bed that had been prepared with a mixture of Dung on Saturday last, I sowed Choice Lucerne, and Rye Grass Seeds in the Garden, to try their Goodness, doing it in the following order: at the end next the corner were two Rows of Clover Seed; in the 3d, 4, 5 and 6th Rye

## MOUNT VERNON FARMER

Grass—the last Row thinnest sowed; 7th and 8th Barley (to see if it would come up)—the last also thinnest sowed; 9, 10, 11, 12th Lucerne—first a few seeds at every 4 inches distance, the next thicker, and so on to the last wch. was very thick.”

The diary under date of May 22, 1760, contains a long extract from Tull’s “Husbandry” on lucerne seed and its cultivation. Writing to Robert R. Livingston in February 1795, thanking him for a report on “Transactions of the Society for Promoting Agriculture, Arts and Manufactures,” he says he will, as soon as he can get time, read, “your experiments on Lucerne with attention; and I am persuaded I shall do it also with pleasure and edification, as I have long been favorably impressed with the value of the grass.” In return, he sends a “pamphlet on the cultivation of potatoes from the shoots.” December 4, 1786, he writes to Clement Biddle asking, “Is the Jerusalem Artichoke to be had in Phila. Could as much of the root be got as would stock an acre? I want to bring it in with other experiments for the benefit of stock.”

The raising of corn was found to be very unsatisfactory because there could not be obtained a yield above fifteen bushels to the acre, which was not profitable, and the crop was accordingly limited to particular uses.

The reason for his continued intensive study of crops was because much of his Mount Vernon lands was not in truth very fertile; and, since there was no institution in those days

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

to test soils and advise as to fertilization, one had to rely upon personal investigation. Furthermore, the land was distant from a good market, and the cost of transportation was heavy. The problem consequently was to produce the most valuable crops of small bulk and to make at home the essentials connected with their marketing. Thus Mount Vernon became a veritable agricultural experiment station.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INDUSTRIALIST

WASHINGTON must have carried on a substantial fishing industry, as he tells of catching 50,000 herring in one night. There was a purchase, the diary informs us, in 1769 from one Burch, captain of a vessel from Bermuda, of 562 barrels of salt for curing and preserving fish, and also a supply of lime. On the 3rd day of February 1770, a sale was made to Robert Adams of 500 barrels of fish, and more if Adams could find the casks:

“He is to take them as fast as they are catched, without giving any interruption to my people, and is to have the use of the Fish House for his Salt, fish, etca., taking care to have the House clean at least before the next fishing season. In consideration of which he is to pay me Ten pounds for the use of the House; give 3/ a thousd. for the Herrings (Virg. money) and 8/4 a hundred (Maryland curry.) for the white fish.”

When the wheat and flour business was well established, Washington turned his attention to live stock, importing the best breeds of cattle and horses from Belgium and England. He became especially interested in the mule and was the first

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person in America to raise a superior breed of mules for working purposes. Previous to 1783, scarcely any mules were to be found in this country. A few had been imported from the West Indies, but they were of diminutive size and of little value. So enthusiastic did he become over mules that he preferred them for all working purposes to the horse, and even drove them to his coach, and was so convinced that this animal was a necessity in the colonies to replace the work horse, that he held mule exhibits in a number of places to introduce them and effect sales. The claim was made that the mule lived longer than the horse, was less liable to disease, required less food, and was in every respect more serviceable and economical. As soon as his views on this subject became known abroad, the King of Spain sent him a present of a jack and two jennies, selected from the royal stud at Madrid.

The jack, called the Royal Gift, was sixteen hands high, of a gray color, heavily made, and of a sluggish disposition. At about the same time, the Marquis de Lafayette sent out a jack and jennies from the Island of Malta; this jack called the Knight of Malta, was a superb animal, black in color, "with the form of a stag and the ferocity of a tiger." Washington preserved the best qualities of the two jacks by crossing the breeds, obtaining a favorite jack, called "Compound," which animal "united the size and strength of the Royal Gift with the high courage and activity of the Knight." The General bred some very fine mules from his coach

## THE INDUSTRIALIST

mares, and in a few years the estate at Mount Vernon became stocked with mules of a superior order, one wagon team of four mules selling for eight hundred dollars. An entry in the diary under date of April 6th says: "Sent my two jack-asses to the election at Marlborough in Maryland that they might be seen." On election day appeared an advertisement in the *Maryland Journal* calling attention to the valuable breeding qualities of the two jacks.

This Mount Vernon enthusiast wrote many letters and articles concerning the raising of fine stock, distributed them largely, sold and gave away many fine animals, and was in fact the founder of the pure bred stock which to this day prevails throughout the south of New England. He advocated well bred stock because it was more profitable and satisfactory in every respect, declaring that scrub stock never could pay its way.

Some sheep were raised,—at one time he had 600,—but apparently the greater interest was in hogs. In February 1760, hogs were butchered to a total of 1,614 pounds; and in December 1786 there was slaughtered a total of 13,867 pounds.

Among Washington's papers are found many carefully prepared and elaborate notes from such works as Tull's "Horse-Shoeing Husbandry" (an epoch-making work by Jethro Tull), Gibson upon "Horses," Duhamel's "A Practical Treatise of Husbandry," Langley's "Book of Gardening," "The Farmer's Compleat Guide," Home's "The Gen-

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

tleman Farmer," and volumes of Young's "Annals of Agriculture." His London agent was ordered to send "the best System now extant of Agriculture." In one letter to this agent, referring particularly to a book desired, Washington describes it as "lately published, done by various hands, but chiefly collected from the papers of Mr. Hale. If this is known to be the best, pray send it, but not if any other is in high esteem." The agent sent Anderson on "Agriculture" and Boswell on "Meadows." These books were the leading authorities at that time and there is every evidence that Washington was a diligent student of them, using their suggestions as a basis for his experimentations, producing results beyond anything even anticipated by these writers.

In Washington's library, which has been preserved, are enumerated nearly fifty titles of works dealing with agriculture and kindred topics. A great interest was aroused in better farming in the colonies between 1784 and 1792, owing to the influence of the English agricultural societies and the example set by Washington. Societies for the advancement of agriculture sprang up in many places. Washington was a member of the Philadelphia Society. In 1792 Samuel Deane of the Massachusetts Society published a book with the comprehensive title, "The New England Farmer, or Georgical Dictionary, containing a compendious account of the Ways and Means in which the Important Art of Husbandry, in all its various branches, is, or may be, practiced to the greatest

## THE INDUSTRIALIST

advantage of this country." We are not informed as to Washington's familiarity with it.

The correspondence on agricultural matters which Washington had with Arthur Young and Sir John Sinclair, eminent English agriculturists, was published soon after his death, together with a number of letters written by other American farmers, including Thomas Jefferson, relative to agriculture in their localities. These letters were the result of inquiries made of Washington by Young in 1791. In order to obtain the facts desired, Washington sent out a questionnaire to some of the most intelligent farmers in the Middle States, and the replies form perhaps our best source of information regarding agricultural conditions in that period. Because of this service and of his general interest in and substantial contributions to agricultural matters, Washington was elected a foreign honorary member of the English Board of Agriculture and received a diploma, which is still preserved among his papers.

Woodrow Wilson, in his "Life of Washington," says: "To be farmer and merchant at once, manage your own negroes and your own overseers, and conduct an international correspondence; to keep the run of prices current, duties, post dues, and commissions, and know the fluctuating rates of exchange; to understand and meet all changes, whether in merchants or in markets, three thousand miles away, required an amount of information, an alertness, a steady attention to details, a sagacity in farming and a shrewdness in



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

trade, such as made a great property a burden to idle and inefficient men. But Washington took pains to succeed."

In the operation of his farms, every implement available was purchased and every invention tried. When the necessity for economizing time and expense was apparent, with no remedy at hand, he tested ideas of his own. He invented a new sort of plow and records: "Spent the greater part of the day in making a new plow of my own invention"; and again, "fitted a two eyed plow, instead of a Duck Bill plow and with much difficulty made my Chariot Wheelhorses plow." Regret is expressed over using these horses, because he thought it might teach them to stop when being driven to the chariot. Another day finds him making "a packing box for a plow model, one hundred fifty nails used in making box." A seed or drill plow was improvised, consisting of a barrel with perforations that dropped the seed when rolled over the ground. It was the forerunner of the present efficient seed drill. Concerning it he writes:

"Rid a little after sunrise to try my drill plow again, which with the alterations of the harrow yesterday, I find will fully answer my expectations; and it drops the grains thicker or thinner in proportion to the quantity of seed in the barrell; the less there is in it, the faster it issues from the holes; the weight of a quantity in a barrel occasions (I presume) a pressure on the holes that do not admit of a free discharge of the seed through them."

## THE INDUSTRIALIST

One of these barrel seeders was sent to a friend, Theodore Bland, with full instructions concerning its use. Many more entries occur in his diaries about this barrel, giving new ways of using it and new additions to it, such as a brush harrow and a roller.

Further evidence of Washington's genuine business ability is furnished by his method of purchasing and producing the many kinds of supplies, including wearing apparel, farm implements, provisions for his household, workmen and slaves, which a vast enterprise such as his required. This necessitated large-scale buying in the markets of England, for few if any of the things needed were available in the new country; and the buying required a knowledge of quality, quantity, and prices, as well as an acquaintance with reliable dealers. After much investigation and many bitter experiences with London merchants, Washington settled upon Robert Cary & Co., London Merchandise Brokers, as his agents, through whom he transacted most of his business, both in the buying of supplies and the selling of his products. Twice a year he sent them carefully itemized orders. Accuracy in accounts and punctilious attention to directions were insisted upon. In a letter to this agent, after criticizing goods received for not being up to quality, he says:

"Tis a custom, I have some reason to believe, with many shopkeepers and tradesmen in London, when they know goods are bespoken for exportation, to palm sometimes old,

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

and sometimes very slight and indifferent goods on us, taking care at the same time to advance the price."

From a diary entry, we learn that on June 18 and 19, 1768, Washington sat at home, "all day prep'g Invoices and Letters to England." These were to his London agent for groceries, hardware, rope, seeds, and numerous other things minutely specified. In the list is found "two handsome stomachers" for Mrs. Washington, with sleeve knots to be made of ribbon, together with necklace strings, also a green satin quilted coat not to exceed 3 pounds in price, and "a handsome grane winter Silk (but not yellow) not to exceed 10 pounds to be bought of and made by Mrs. Harris into a sacque and coat for a middle sized woman." The chariot, which he previously ordered, must be so packed that none of the panels would crack or split in shipment from England.

From Charles Lawrence, a London tailor, was ordered a suit of "fashionable coloured cloth" to fit "easy and loose," complaining that his former clothes were too short and he wanted the "Breeches to be made long." He also wanted pocket knives, fiddle strings, and a saddle to come along with some clothes for John Parke Custis. Martha Parke Custis is to have a smelling bottle, scissors, gloves, and "a very handsome and fashl. Womans Hg. Saddle with Bridle and everythg. compl." John Didsbury, a London boot-maker, receives orders for family shoes. Mrs. Washington's

## THE INDUSTRIALIST

last shoes did not fit well, and new measurements are sent with a demand for better material.

The big expense of buying drygoods in London caused Washington to investigate carefully the cost of home manufacture. Being convinced, thereby, that he could save money and produce a saleable product at Mount Vernon, looms were erected, and the business of weaving many kinds of cloth was successfully carried on, filling every need of the household and farm people. A ready market was found for the surplus, especially during the non-importing days of the Revolution. In 1768 there was produced on the Mount Vernon estate  $815\frac{3}{4}$  yards of linen,  $365\frac{1}{4}$  of woollen cloth, 144 yards of linsey, and 40 yards of cotton cloth. The variety of fabrics made included "striped Woollen, wool plaided, cotton striped, linen, wool-birds-eye, cotton filled with wool, M's and O's, cotton Indian dimity, cotton jump stripe, linen filled with tow, cotton striped with silk, Roman M, James twilled, huccabac, broadcloth, counterpane, diaper, Kirsey wool, barragon, fustion, bed ticking, herring box and Shalloon." The work was done in spinning houses, equipped with looms, wheels, reels, flax brakes, and all needed appliances. All the raw materials came from the estate. Investigation proved that the hides of a certain breed of cattle were particularly suitable for making shoes; accordingly a tannery was installed, and shoemakers were employed to make all shoes needed. Finally there was issued a standing order to all overseers "Buy nothing you can make your-

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

selves." The result was that nearly everything used was homemade, including wagons, rope, harness, wearing apparel, saddles, bricks, etc. Thus Washington had become economically independent of England before the Revolutionary War.

For family convenience and economy, the practice of putting up ice, then very unusual, was adopted. Dolly Madison is credited with having invented ice cream, but Washington antedated her in the enjoyment of it, for in his cash memorandum book, under date of May 17, 1784, is entered, "By a cream machine for ice 1.13.4."

The cost of candles was lessened in this manner:

"In order to try the difference between burning Spermaciti and Tallow candles, I took one of each, the 1st weighing 3 oz. 10 p. w. 6g., and the 2nd 5 oz. 2 p. 2g., and lighted them at the same instant. The first burnt 8 hours and 21 minutes, when, of the latter their remained 14 pennyweight; which continued to burn one hour and a quarter longer, making in all 9 hours 36 minutes. By which it appears (as both burnt without flaring) that, estimating Spermaciti candles at 3, per lb., the former is dearer than the latter, as 30 is nearly 13, in other words more than  $2\frac{1}{4}$  dearer."

One secret of his business success was in the economies he perfected, seemingly trivial, by such experiments as those with the candles. Edmund Randolph in his closing days wrote of Washington: "His economy, without which virtue

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itself is always in hazard, afforded nutriment to his character."

The policy of close and sympathetic relations with employees, even though slaves, was observed by Washington. He was never familiar with his slaves or working people, but was ever kind and considerate, giving them all needed medical attention and frequently visiting the sick. Ample clothing, provisions, and housing were provided, and fair wages paid workmen. Overseers and farmers were trusted until found careless or deceitful, and then Washington was ruthless. He was exceedingly exact in living up to his contracts and expecting the same treatment from others; was severe at times in his rebukings. No negro was permitted to keep a dog for fear it would kill or injure the sheep or hogs, although Washington himself was exceedingly fond of dogs and kept many. He had time to enter in his diary one day that "Mopsy had eight puppies" and again, "anointed all my hounds (old dogs as well as puppies) with hog's lard and brimstone for the mange." Each of his 216 negroes was known by name; a birth record of each negro child was kept, and a school for them was maintained on the plantation. Washington bought very few slaves and was in fact opposed to slavery. He saw no way to manumission except through education, gradual enlightenment, and example. All his slaves were freed by his will. Bishop Francis Asbury tells in his diary of a visit to Washington in May 1785, when he "gave us his opinion against slavery." In a letter to his

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

nephew Lawrence Lewis on August 17, 1799, writing of the burden caused by the natural increase of his slaves, he says: "To sell the surplus I cannot. I am principled against this kind of traffic in the human species. To hire them out is almost as bad, because they could not be disposed of in families to any advantage, and to disburse the families I have an aversion." His own slaves were so mixed with the dower slaves of Mrs. Washington, that it would have been well nigh impossible to have freed them before his death. It would have disrupted his whole organization. This was a very radical attitude in those days for a slave holder, but there were too many things agitating the public mind at that time for him to start a reform in this direction. Had he lived later he might have been an abolitionist.

His interest was not wholly absorbed in his Mount Vernon affairs, for he writes Jefferson asking information about the manufacture of glass in France with a view to starting the industry in Virginia, where the raw material was available. Also facts about cotton mills in Europe were solicited. The building of iron works was given thought; and he visited a site which William Crawford recommended for a plant, and paid Fielding Lewis £5 for drawing plans for a building, but there never was time to select a location where he felt the conditions were favorable for economical operations. One is impressed with the fact that had the war and the presidency not interfered, Washington would have been a builder of profitable industries, as his operations at Mount

## THE INDUSTRIALIST

Vernon clearly demonstrated his ability in that line, and his interest in them was always keen.

In conducting his affairs, his habit was to commit his bargains to writing, which he was quite adept in preparing. Preserved among his papers is the often quoted agreement with Philip Barter, gardener:

"ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT made this twelfth day of April, Anno Domini, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, by and between George Washington, Esq., of the parish of Truro, in the county of Fairfax, state of Virginia, on the one part, and Philip Barter, gardener, on the other. Witness, that the said Philip Barter, for and in consideration of the covenants hereinafter mentioned, doth promise and agree to serve the said George Washington for the term of one year as a gardener, and that he will during the said time, conduct himself soberly, diligently and honestly; that he will faithfully and industriously perform all and every part of his duty as a gardener, to the best of his knowledge and abilities and that he will not at any time suffer himself to be disguised with liquor except on times hereinafter mentioned.

"In consideration of these things being well and duly performed on the part of said Philip Barter, the said George Washington doth agree to allow him (the said Philip) the same kind and quality of provisions he has heretofore had, and likewise, annually, a decent suit of clothes, befitting a



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

man in his station; to consist of coat, vest, and breeches; a working-jacket and breeches of homespun, besides: two white shirts; three checks, do; two linen overalls; as many pairs of shoes as are necessary for him; four dollars at Christmas, with which he may be drunk four days and four nights; two dollars at Easter to effect the same purpose; two dollars at Whitsuntide to be drunk for two days; a dram in the morning, and a drink of grog at dinner at noon.

“For the true and faithful performance of all and each part of these things, the parties, have hereunto set their hands this twenty-third day of April, Anno Domini, 1787.

his  
PHILIP BARTER, X  
mark.  
GEORGE WASHINGTON

Witness:

GEORGE A. WASHINGTON  
TOBIAS LEAR”

## CHAPTER VI

### ACCOUNTING

THE carrying on of such a diversity of enterprises required a system of bookkeeping and documentary filing. He used a letter press similar to that in common use in all offices a few years ago and devised a filing system not unlike that prevailing generally today. His accounts were entered by his own hand in three ledgers, designated A, B, and C. The first two have been preserved in the Congressional Library, in which occurs reference to a transference of all accounts to ledger C, which is now in the collection of Mr. Lloyd W. Smith of New York. Ledger A begins in December 1749, when he was eighteen, and covers twenty-three years. It is bound in pigskin and contains four hundred heavy pages. It is ruled like a cash book, having the debit column on the left hand and the credits on the right.

The wonder is that Washington had time to keep these accounts and make up financial statements, conduct his voluminous correspondence which had to be written by hand and attend to his multifarious duties and enterprises. His versatility and steady application to details in all business affairs excite our admiration. There was no lost motion in the systematic use of the day. He arose at four; spent three

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

hours on his correspondence, accounts, and writings; after a simple breakfast, rode over his farms; dined at six and retired at nine. A marvelous self-control enabled him to turn readily from one occupation to another; returning from an exciting fox hunt he could immediately draft a lease, examine an account, issue orders, or write a letter.

One naturally is interested in knowing what were his profits and the general volume of his receipts and expenses. Several persons have studied the books and accounts available, but all have found it impossible to make an accurate balance sheet in present day values. It is clear that his fortune came not so much from the operation of his farms as from the increment of his lands. The income from his farms went back into improvements and equipment and experimentations. He depended for ready money largely on sales of real estate, and was constantly buying and selling lands; for he regarded land "as the most permanent estate we can hold and most likely to increase in its value."

From his accounts we find, for example, that from August 3, 1775, to September 1783, he received a total of £80,167, or about \$400,835 in modern value; but it is well nigh impossible to figure his yearly income in present United States currency because of the varying forms of depreciated money in circulation in those years. Washington himself tried to figure his profits, but despaired of the job and finally turned to paying his manager in produce instead of money. On the 31st of December 1769, he balanced his accounts and made

## ACCOUNTING

this entry, "By cash lost, stolen, or paid away without charging 143.15.2."

In those days a business man had to figure, according to the best information he could obtain, the real value of the money issued by Pennsylvania or Maryland or Massachusetts or any other state. On the margin of many leaves of Washington's account books are calculations along these lines. On one occasion he took with him to Philadelphia "6 joes, 67 half joes, 2 one-eighteenth joes, 3 doubloons, 1 pistole, 2 moidores, 1 half moidore, 2 double louis d'or, 3 single louis d'or, 80 guineas, 7 half guineas, besides silver and bank notes."

He lost most of that part of the fortune which came to him from his wife, consisting of mortgages and notes, because of the depreciation of money. It was loaned on inflation and repaid on deflation.

"I am now receiving a shilling on the pound in discharge of Bonds which ought to have been paid me, & would have been realized before I left Virginia but for my indulgences to the debtors."

He evidently was a poor collector. In 1778 seven thousand pounds in bonds were paid off in so many hundred pounds in depreciated paper.

The following statement in his own handwriting of his crops account of 1789 illustrates the bookkeeping system and gives an idea of his earnings:

# WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

## *First Statement of the Crops in 1789*

|                       |   | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Har-<br/>rowed</i> |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Corn; 375 acres.      | 1 ploughing in the fall of 1788                                   | 375          |              |                       |
|                       | Listing the field in March, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the above work | 94           |              |                       |
|                       | Opening the furrows in April, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the last work      | 31           |              |                       |
|                       | Breaking up the balks in May, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the whole          | 281          |              |                       |
|                       | Ploughing do. in June, do. do.                                    | 281          |              |                       |
|                       | Do. do. in July, do. do.  | 281          | 1343         |                       |
|                       | Three times harrowed do. do. each                                 | 281          |              | 843                   |
| Rye; 375 acres.       | Once ploughed for seeding in September                            |              | 281          |                       |
|                       | Once harrowed do.   |              |              | 281                   |
| Buckwheat; 375 acres. | One ploughing after Rye comes off                                 | 375          |              |                       |
|                       | One do. in April  | 375          | 750          |                       |
|                       | Three harrowings, 1 before, and 2 after sowing                    |              |              | 1125                  |
| Wheat; 375 acres.     | Ploughing in Buckwheat in June                                    | 375          |              |                       |
|                       | Do. seeding ground with Wheat in August                           | 375          | 750          |                       |
|                       | One harrowing after sowing  |              |              | 375                   |
| Sundries; 375 acres.  | One ploughing in the fall of 1788                                 | 375          |              |                       |
| 75 do.                | In Pease ploughed into three-feet ridges in April                 | 75           |              |                       |
|                       | Checkered, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of above work in April             | 19           |              |                       |
| 234 do.               | In Buckwheat for a crop, ploughed in April                        | 234          |              |                       |
|                       | Do. 1st July  | 234          |              |                       |
|                       | Three times harrowed 1st July                                     |              |              | 702                   |
| 8 do.                 | Scarcity ploughed in March  | 8            |              |                       |
|                       | do. May   | 8            |              |                       |
|                       | do. July  | 8            |              |                       |
| 8 do.                 | Pumpkins, ploughed in March                                       | 8            |              |                       |
|                       | do. in May  | 8            |              |                       |
|                       | do. in July   | 8            |              |                       |
| 20 do.                | Flax, ploughed in March   | 20           |              |                       |
|                       | do. April   | 20           | 1025         |                       |
|                       | Three times harrowed  |              |              | 60                    |
| Barley; 375 acres.    | First ploughing January or February                               | 375          |              |                       |
|                       | Second do. February or March                                      | 375          | 750          |                       |
|                       | Three times harrowed  |              |              | 1125                  |
|                       |   |              | 4899         | 4511                  |

# ACCOUNTING

## *Of the above Work,*

|   | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Har-<br/>rowed</i> |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Between the 1st of October and Christmas, Corn amounts to | 375          |              |                       |
| Buckwheat      "      "                                   | 375          |              |                       |
| Sundries      "      "                                    | 375          | 1125         |                       |
|   | <hr/>        |              |                       |
| In January and February, Barley, first ploughing          |              | 375          |                       |
| February and May      do.      second ploughing           |              | 375          | 1125                  |
| March, listing for Corn as above                          | 94           |              |                       |
| Ploughing first time for Root of Scarcity                 | 8            |              |                       |
| Do.      do.      Flax                                    | 20           |              |                       |
| Do.      do.      Pumpkins                                | 8            | 130          | 60                    |
|   | <hr/>        |              |                       |
| April, second ploughing for Flax                          | 20           |              | 60                    |
| Do.      Pease, in three-feet ridges                      | 75           |              |                       |
| do.      checkered  | 19           |              |                       |
| Opening Corn lists for planting                           | 31           |              |                       |
| Buckwheat for manure                                      | 375          | 520          | 1125                  |
|   | <hr/>        |              |                       |
| Do.      for seed   | 234          |              |                       |
| May, Pumpkins, second ploughing, 8; Root for Scarcity, 8  | 16           |              |                       |
| Breaking balks between Corn                               | 281          | 531          |                       |
|   | <hr/>        |              |                       |
| June, ploughing Corn second time                          | 281          |              |                       |
| Do.      Buckwheat for manure                             | 375          | 656          |                       |
|   | <hr/>        |              |                       |
| July, Buckwheat for seed                                  | 234          |              |                       |
| Third ploughing of Corn                                   | 281          |              | 281                   |
| Third      do.      Root of Scarcity, 8; Pumpkins, 8      | 16           | 531          |                       |
|   | <hr/>        |              |                       |
| August, Wheat   |              | 375          |                       |
| September, Rye  |              | 281          |                       |
|   |              | <hr/>        | <hr/>                 |
|   |              | 4899         | 4511                  |

# WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

## *Results of the First Statement*

| Dr.                          | lbs. s. d. |                             | lbs. s. d. | Cr. |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----|
| For 375 bushels Rye for seed |            | By 5625 bushels Corn at 3s. | 843 0 0    |     |
| at 3s.                       | 56 5 0     | 5625 do. Rye, 3s.           | 843 0 0    |     |
| 375 bushels Buckwheat        |            | 5625 do. Potatoes, 1s.      | 281 5 0    |     |
| for seed, at 2s.             | 37 10 0    | 4500 do. Barley,            |            |     |
| 375 do. Wheat, do. 5s.       | 93 15 0    | 3s. 6d.                     | 787 0 0    |     |
| 750 do. Barley do.           |            | 3750 do. Wheat, 5s.         | 937 10 0   |     |
| 3s. 6d.                      | 131 5 0    | Sundries, viz:              |            |     |
| Sundries, viz:               |            | 1404 bushels Buckwheat      |            |     |
| 75 bush. Pease for seed      |            | at 2s.                      | 140 8 0    |     |
| at 4s.                       | 15 0 0     | 375 do. Pease, 4s.          | 75 0 0     |     |
| 234 do. Buckwheat 2s.        | 23 8 0     | 100 do. Flax-seed,          |            |     |
| 30 do. Flax. 3s. 6d.         | 5 5 0      | 3s. 6d.                     | 17 10 0    |     |
| 3750 lbs. Clover-seed 8d.    | 125 0 0    | Dressed Flax.               |            |     |
| 3120 bushels of Corn for     |            | Buckwheat 375               |            |     |
| negros, at 3s.               | 468 0 0    | acres for manure            |            |     |
| 2750 bushels of Rye for      |            |                             |            |     |
| horses, 3s.                  | 412 10 0   |                             | 3924 13 0  |     |
| 100 do. Salt, 2s. 6d.        | 12 10 0    | 375 acres Clover 20s.       | 375        |     |
| 330 gallons Rum, 2s.         | 33 0 0     |                             |            |     |
| 750 bushels of Potatoes      |            |                             | 4299 13 0  |     |
| for seed, 1s.                | 37 10 0    | 100 thousand Tobacco        |            |     |
|                              | 1450 18 0  | hills, 20 hhd.              |            |     |
|                              |            | £7 10s.                     | 150        |     |
|                              |            |                             | 4449 13 0  |     |

# ACCOUNTING

## *Second Statement of Crops in 1789*

|  | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Har-<br/>rowed</i> |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Corn; 375 acres. Same in all respects as No. 1             |              | 1343         | 843                   |
| Buckwheat; 375 acres. First ploughing in April             | 375          |              |                       |
| Second do. last of June                                    | 375          | 750          |                       |
| Three harrowings   |              |              | 1125                  |
| Wheat; 375 acres. One ploughing after the Buckwheat is cut |              | 375          |                       |
| Two harrowings   |              |              | 750                   |
| Sundries; 375 acres. The same as No. 1                     |              | 1025         | 762                   |
| Barley; 375 acres. The same as No. 1                       |              | 750          | 1125                  |
|  |              | <hr/> 4243   | <hr/> 4605            |

### *Of the above Work,*

|  |     |            |            |
|--|-----|------------|------------|
| One ploughing for Corn, 1788                         |     | 375        |            |
| Fall, one ploughing for Sundries, do.                |     | 375        |            |
| January and February, first ploughing for Barley     | 375 |            |            |
| February and March, second do. do.                   | 375 | 750        | 1125       |
| March, listing for Corn                              | 94  |            |            |
| ploughing first time for Root of Scarcity            | 8   |            |            |
| Do. do. Flax   | 20  |            |            |
| Do. do. Pumpkins                                     | 8   | 130        |            |
| April, second ploughing for Flax                     | 20  |            |            |
| Do. Pease, in three-feet ridges                      | 75  |            |            |
| Do. checked  | 19  |            |            |
| Opening Corn lists                                   | 31  |            |            |
| First ploughing for Buckwheat for a crop             | 375 | 520        |            |
| May, first ploughing of Buckwheat among the sundries | 234 |            |            |
| Pumpkins, second ploughing, 8 acres; Scarcity, 8 do. | 16  |            |            |
| ploughing balks between Corn, first time             | 281 | 531        | 281        |
| June, ploughing Corn second time                     | 281 |            |            |
| second do. of Buckwheat                              | 375 | 656        | 1125       |
| July, the same                                       | 234 |            |            |
| Corn third time                                      | 281 |            |            |
| Third ploughing for Scarcity, 8; for Pumpkins, 8     | 16  | 531        |            |
| August, ploughing for Wheat                          |     | 375        | 750        |
|  |     | <hr/> 4243 | <hr/> 4605 |



# WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

## *Results of the Second Statement*

| Dr.                        | lbs. s. d. |                         | lbs. s. d. | Cr. |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-----|
| For 375 bushels of Buck-   |            | By 5625 bushels of      |            |     |
| wheat for seed, 2s.        | 37 10 0    | Corn, 3s.               | 843 0 0    |     |
| 375 do. seed Wheat, 5s.    | 93 15 0    | 5625 do. Potatoes, 1s.  | 281 5 0    |     |
| Sundries, viz:             |            | Buckwheat ploughed in   |            |     |
| 75 bushels Pease, 4s.      | 15 0 0     | for manure.             |            |     |
| 234 do. Buckwheat, 2s.     | 23 8 0     | 3750 bushels Wheat, 5s. | 937 10 0   |     |
| 30 do. Flax-seed           |            | Sundries, viz:          |            |     |
| 3s. 6d.                    | 5 5 0      | 375 bushels Pease, 4s.  | 75 0 0     |     |
| 750 do. Barley,            |            | 1404 do. Buckwheat,     |            |     |
| 3s. 6d.                    | 131 5 0    | 2s.                     | 140 8 0    |     |
| 3750 lbs. Clover-seed, 8d. | 125 0 0    | 4500 do. Barley,        |            |     |
| 3120 bushels Corn, 3s.     | 468 0 0    | 3s. 6d.                 | 787 0 0    |     |
| 2750 do. Rye, 3s.          | 412 10 0   | 100 do. Flax-seed,      |            |     |
| 100 do. Salt, 2s. 6d.      | 12 10 0    | 3s. 6d.                 | 17 10 0    |     |
| 330 gallons, Rum, 2s.      | 33 0 0     |                         | 3081 13 0  |     |
| 750 bushels Potatoes for   |            | Dressed Flax.           |            |     |
| seed, 1s.                  | 37 10 0    | 375 acres Clover, 20s.  | 375 0 0    |     |
|                            | 1394 13 0  | 375 do. do. do.         | 375 0 0    |     |
|                            |            |                         | 3831 13 0  |     |

# ACCOUNTING

## *Third Statement of Crops in 1789*

|  | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Har-<br/>rowed</i> |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|
| Corn; 375 acres. The same as No. 1 and No. 2                                 | 1343         | 843                   |
| Barley; 375 acres do. do.  | 750          | 1125                  |
| Buckwheat; 375 acres. Ploughed in fall, in March and April                   | 1125         | 1125                  |
| Wheat; 375 acres. Ploughed in June, to cover Buckwheat and<br>Corn in August | 750          | 375                   |
| Flax; 20 acres. Ploughed twice—harrowed three times                          | 40           | 60                    |
|  | <hr/> 4008   | <hr/> 3528            |

## *Of the above Work,*

|  | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Acres</i> | <i>Har-<br/>rowed</i> |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Fall, one ploughing for Corn, 1788               | 375          |              |                       |
| Do. Buckwheat, do.                               | 375          | 750          |                       |
| January and February, first ploughing for Barley | 375          |              |                       |
| February and March, second do. do.               | 375          | 750          | 1125                  |
| March, listing for Corn                          | 94           |              |                       |
| Second ploughing for Buckwheat                   | 375          |              |                       |
| First do. Flax                                   | 20           | 489          |                       |
| April, Second do. do.                            | 20           |              | 60                    |
| Third do. Buckwheat                              | 375          |              | 750                   |
| Opening Corn lists                               | 31           |              |                       |
| May, breaking up the balks between Corn          |              | 281          | 281                   |
| June, second ploughing of Corn                   | 281          |              | 281                   |
| Ploughing in Buckwheat                           | 375          | 656          |                       |
| July, ploughing Corn the third time              | 281          |              |                       |
| Ploughing for Wheat or Buckwheat                 | 375          | 656          | 750                   |
|  | <hr/> 4008   | <hr/> 3528   |                       |

# WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

## Results of Third Statement

| Dr.                        | lbs. s. d. |                          | lbs. s. d. | Cr. |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|-----|
| For 750 bushels of Barley  |            | By 5625 bushels of Corn, |            |     |
| for seed, at 3s. 6d.       | 131 15 0   | 3s.                      | 843 0 0    |     |
| 375 do. Buckwheat, 2s.     | 37 10 0    | 5625 do. Potatoes, 1s.   | 281 5 0    |     |
| 375 do. Wheat, 5s.         | 93 15 0    | 4500 do. Barley, 3s. 6d. | 787 0 0    |     |
| 3750 lbs. Clover-seed, 8d. | 125 0 0    | 3750 do. Wheat, 5s.      | 937 10 0   |     |
| 30 bushels of Flax-seed    | 5 5 0      | Buckwheat for manure.    |            |     |
| 3120 do. Corn, 3s.         | 468 0 0    | 100 bush. Flax-seed,     |            |     |
| 2750 do. Rye for Horses    | 412 10 0   | 3s. 6d.                  | 17 10 0    |     |
| 100 do. Salt, 2s. 6d.      | 12 10 0    |                          | 2866 5 0   |     |
| 330 gallons of Rum, 2s.    | 33 10 0    | 375 acres Clover, 20s.   | 375        |     |
| 750 bushels Potatoes for   |            | 375 do. do. do.          | 375        |     |
| seed, 1s.                  | 37 10 0    | 375 do. do. do.          | 375        |     |
|                            | 1357 5 0   |                          | 3091 5 0   |     |

His own figuring of actual balance of gain and loss for 1798, which he states was a poor year, is as follows:

## Balance of Gain and Loss, 1798

| Dr. Gained               |            |                             | Cr. Lost  |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Dogue Run Farm .....     | 397.11. 2  | Mansion House .....         | 466.18.2½ |
| Union Farm .....         | 529.10.11½ | Muddy Hole Farm .....       | 60. 1.3½  |
| River Farm .....         | 234. 4.11  | Spinning .....              | 51. 2.0   |
| Smith's Shop .....       | 34.12.09½  | Hire of Head Overseer ...   | 140.      |
| Distillery .....         | 83.13. 1   |                             |           |
| Jacks .....              | 56.1       |                             |           |
| Traveler (Stud horse) .. | 9.17       |                             |           |
| Shoemaker .....          | 28.17. 1   | By clear gain on the estate | 898.16.4¼ |
| Fishery .....            | 165.12. 0¾ |                             |           |
| Dairy .....              | 30.12. 3   |                             |           |

Paul Leicester Ford considers this a poor showing for an estate with negroes, "which had cost him over \$50,000 and on which there was live stock which at the lowest estimation was worth \$15,000 more." On the other hand P. L. Haworth says, "In some respects it was a poor showing, yet

## ACCOUNTING

the profit Washington sets down is about seven per cent upon sixty-five thousand dollars, and seven per cent is more than the average farmer makes off his farm today, except through appreciation in the value of land. The truth is, however, that Mount Vernon, including the live stock and slaves, was really worth in 1798 nearer two hundred thousand dollars than sixty-five thousand, so that the actual return would only be about two and a fourth per cent."

William Roscoe Thayer thus comments: "By nature Washington was a man of business, he wished to see things grown, not so much for the actual increase in value which that indicated, as because increase seemed to be a proof of proper method."

We might venture a guess, which is the best that anyone can do from the examination of his financial records, that his income from Mount Vernon was around fifteen thousand dollars a year, after he had established his wheat and flour trade.

Washington was not moved by the desire to accumulate wealth for its own sake. Money and property with him must be beneficent. Wealth gave him an opportunity to look after "his people" on the plantation; to give some time to the affairs of his neighborhood, borough, colony, and country; to cultivate flowers, trees, and shrubbery; to breed poultry and live stock. In the cash book under date of March 17, 1785, we find: "By freight of a swan and 4 geese from Norw'y 18/." On December 13, 1788: "By Capt. Baine p'd

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

him the freight on two chinese pigs and 2 geese from Norfolk to his place 7/4."

From letters written to his stepson, J. P. Custis, whose estate he managed for several years and from the duties of which he desired Custis to relieve him, we learn Washington's idea about real estate investments and the handling of money. Quoting from one letter dated October 12, 1778:

"A moment's reflection must convince you of two things: first, that lands are of permanent value; that there is scarcely a possibility of their falling in price, but almost a moral certainty of their rising exceedingly in value. And, secondly, that our paper currency is fluctuating, that it has depreciated considerably, and that no human foresight can, with precision, tell how low it may get, as the rise or fall of it depends upon contingencies which the utmost stretch of human sagacity can neither foresee nor prevent. These positions being granted (and no one can gainsay the justice of them), it follows that by parting from your lands, you give a certainty for an uncertainty, because it is not the nominal price—it is not ten, fifteen, or twenty pounds an acre—but the relative value of this sum to specie, or something of substantial worth, that is to constitute a good price. The inference, therefore, I mean to draw, and the advice I shall give in consequence of it, is this, that you do not convert the lands you now hold into cash faster than your present contract with the Alexanders, and a certain prospect of again vesting it in

## ACCOUNTING

other lands more convenient, requires of you. This will be treading upon sure ground. It will enable you to discharge contracts already entered into, and, in effect, exchange land for land, for it is a matter of moonshine to you, considered in that point of view simply, how much the money depreciates, if you can discharge one pound with another, and get land of equal value to that you sell. But far different from this is the case of those who sell for cash and keep that cash by them, put it to interest, or receive it in annual payments; for, in either of these cases, if our currency should unfortunately continue to depreciate in the manner it has done in the course of the last two years, a pound may not, in the space of two years more, be worth a shilling, the difference of which becomes a clear loss to the possessor, and evinces, in a clear point of view, the force and efficacy of my advice to you to pay debts, and vest it in something that will retain its primitive value; or rather, in your case, not to part with that thing of value for money, unless it be with a view to the investing it in something of equal value. . . .

“It may be said that our money may receive a proper tone again, and in that case it would be an advantage to turn lands, &c., into cash for the benefit of the rise. In answer to this, I shall only observe that this is a lottery; that it may, or may not, happen; that, if it should happen, you have lost nothing; if it should not, you have saved your estate, which, in the other case, might have been sunk. . . .

“My design in being thus particular with you, is to answer

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

two purposes; first, to show my ideas of the impropriety of parting with your own lands faster than you can invest the money in other lands (comprehending those already purchased); and, secondly, to evince to you the propriety of my own conduct in securing to myself and your mother the intrinsic value, neither more nor less, of the dower estate."

In a letter to Custis dated August 24, 1779, are set forth his views, as requested by Custis, concerning the sale of certain lands under consideration, and some of his business principles are stated:

"The present profit of your land in the Eastern shore may be trifling—nay, I will admit that, at this time, it is an encumbrance to you—but still it retains in itself an intrinsic and real value, which rises nominally in proportion to the depreciation and will always be valuable, if (admitting the worst) the money should cease to pass. But, though the event is not probable, I will suppose that to be the case, or that it should continue to depreciate, as it has done, for the last ten months, where are you then? Bereft of your land, and in possession of a large sum of money that will neither buy victuals nor clothes.

"There are but two motives which ought, and I trust, can, induce you to sell: the one is to invest the money in the purchase of something else of equal value immediately; the other, to place it in the public funds. If the first is your object I have no hesitation in giving my opinion in favor of







## ACCOUNTING

the sale; because lands at so great a distance from you never will be profitable, and your only consideration is to be careful in your bargains elsewhere, making the prices of the thing sold and the things bought correspond with respect to times and places. In fact, this is but another name for barter or exchange; but, when the other is your inducement the whole matter turns upon the credit and appreciation of the money, and these again upon financing, loans, taxes, war, peace, good success, bad success, the arts of designing men, mode of redemption, and other contingent events, which, in my judgment, very few men see far enough into to justify a capital risk; consequently you would be playing a hazardous and possibly, in the issue, a ruinous game, for the chance of having sold at the turn of the tide, as it were, when there is not much fear of foregoing this advantage by any sudden appreciation of our money. In a word, by holding your land a few months longer, you can only lose the taxes; by selling, to place the money in the fund you may lose considerably. Selling to buy, as I have before said, I consider as an exchange only; but then both bargains should be made at the same time."

While at Morristown in January 1780, this letter was written to Custis:

"I should have acknowledged the receipt of your letter of the 12th ult. long since, but for the many important matters which have claimed my attention.

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

“My letter which missed you on its passage to Williamsburg, will acquaint you (as there is little doubt of its having got to hand long ere this) of the footing I proposed to put the valuation of the cattle upon that you had of me. I only wished to hear upon what principle Colonel Bassett acted, as I thought it ungenteeled to give a gentleman the trouble of performing a service and disregard it so much afterwards, as not even to inquire upon what grounds he want—as I want nothing but justice, and this being your aim, it is scarce possible for us to disagree—but there is one thing which ought to be held in remembrance, and I mention it accordingly, and that is, that I should get no more *real* value for my cattle at £40 apiece, payable in the fall of 1779, than I should have got at £10 the preceding fall, provided the money had been then paid. For example—you could have got two barrels of corn in 1778 for £10, and I can get no more now for £40. With respect to other things it is the same. It would be very hard therefore, by keeping me out of the use of the money a year, to reduce the debt three-fourths of the original value—which is evidently the case, because the difference between specie and paper in the fall of 1778 was about four for one only—now the difference is upwards of thirty, consequently, ten pounds paid at that period was equal to 50s. good money; but paid at this day it is not worth, nor will it fetch more than a dollar. Had the money been paid and put into the loan office at the time you say the cattle ought to have been valued, I should have received a proportionate

## ACCOUNTING

interest—that is, as the money depreciated the nominal sum for the interest would, by a resolve of Congress, have increased, and I should have got the real value in the interest; whereas, if you pay me £10 in loan-office certificates of this date for my cattle, I shall receive for every £10 or 50s., which is the relative worth of it, according to the then difference of exchange, one dollar and no more.

“These are self-evident truths; and nothing, in my opinion, is more just and reasonable, if you can come at, and do fix the value of the cattle at what they are worth in the fall of 1778, and would then have been appraised at, that you should pay loan-office certificates of that date; for had you paid me the money at that time, I should have let it to the public, if there had been no other use for it, as it is not a custom with me to keep money to look at.”

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MAN IN THE COMMUNITY

COMMINGLING with the practical and commercial in Washington's nature, were strong religious and humanistic qualities. The overshadowing Providence of God was his firm belief. Although an ardent Mason, his contribution went to Catholic as well as Protestant churches. It was natural that the business affairs of the Pohick Episcopal Church, seven miles from Mount Vernon, which he attended in the early years of his married life, should interest him. In 1764 the parishioners decided that a new church was needed, and a controversy arose as to the proper location of it, George Mason heading a group which insisted on the old site, while Washington and his friends deemed a more central location advisable. To ascertain the facts, Washington made a careful survey map of the whole neighborhood, showing the location of each house and the distance of each from the old church building. Backed by this proof, there remained no difficulty in convincing the parishioners that a more central site was desirable. The ground plan and the elevation of the building, which he drew, were used in erecting the new structure.

A tenderness for the unfortunate made him more chari-

## THE MAN IN THE COMMUNITY

table than most men of his day. P. L. Haworth, a meticulous student of Washington's life, says: "Having for many years studied his career from every imaginable point of view, I give it as my deliberate opinion that perhaps no man ever lived who was more considerate of the rights and feelings of others. Not even Lincoln had a bigger heart." Every year, by instructions to his manager, a corn house was filled for the sole use of the indigent. The "honest" poor were permitted the use of his fishing stations at certain times; and when they were not equal to the hard work of hauling the seine for herring, he had his servants assist them. While burdened with the military cares at Cambridge, he writes Lund Washington:

"Let the hospitality of the house, with respect to the poor, be kept up. Let no one go away hungry. If any of this kind of people should be in want of corn, supply their necessities, provided it does not encourage them in idleness."

This proviso is in line with modern social teaching. In November 1785, hearing of the hurricane in Jamaica, he wrote his friend Vaughan:

"Hearing of the distress in which that Island, with others in the West Indies, is involved by the late hurricane, I have taken the liberty of requesting Mr. Vaughan's acceptance, for his own use, of a few barrels of Superfine Flour of my own manufacture."

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

February 3, 1793, when President, his manager was instructed that:

"Sarah Flatfoot (you call her Lightfoot) has been accustomed to receive a pair of shoes, stockings, a country cloth petticoat and an oznabrig shift, all ready made, annually, and it is not meant to discontinue it."

The slaves were regarded as human beings and treated accordingly. On September 29, 1792, when President of the United States, he writes his manager:

"My fear is, that the under-overseers are so unfeeling, in short, viewing the negroes in no other light than as a better kind of cattle, the moment they cease to work, they cease their care of them."

The negroes and employees were called "my people," which expressed a feeling of personal obligation towards their welfare. Returning home one day from the horse races at Alexandria, after stopping at his farms, he humorously notes in his diary that "most of my people had gone to the races." The humanitarian reputation he bore is gleaned from a lease given him by a Mrs. French on her dower lands, with her forty negroes, in which she provided that in the event of Washington's death and of his successor's maltreating the negroes, the lease would be forfeited. She was apparently sure that as long as Washington lived the negroes would be properly cared for.

## THE MAN IN THE COMMUNITY

Children delighted him and, although possessing none of his own, he always had several under his care, in addition to his stepchildren, in whose education he took especial interest. Reverend James Muir, who had a school for poor orphan children in Alexandria, received an annual contribution. The orders to his London agent frequently call for toys, such as "a fashionable dressed doll-baby to cost one guinea, another to cost five shillings," and numerous items of gifts for girls and boys.

A few hours after Cornwallis had surrendered his sword at Yorktown, John Parke Custis, the only son of Mrs. Washington, died of camp fever. Washington stood at the bedside and "tenderly embracing the bereaved wife and mother, observed to the weeping group around the remains of him he so dearly loved, 'From this moment I adopt his two youngest children as my own.'"

The lad, when later a student at Princeton College, writing to his foster father for money to purchase a class gown, received the following reply:

"Yesterday's mail brought me your letter of the 12th instant, and under cover of this letter you will receive a ten-dollar bill, to purchase a gown, &c., if proper. But as the classes may be distinguished by a better insignia I advise you not to provide these without first obtaining the approbation of your tutors; otherwise you may be distinguished more by folly, than by the dress. . . .



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

"Endeavor to conciliate the good will of all your fellow students, rendering them every act of kindness in your power. . . . Never let an indigent person ask, without receiving something, if you have the means; always recollecting in what light the widow's mite was viewed."

The greatest eulogy which any man in these United States can receive is embodied in the simple statement that he was a good citizen. Such a person conscientiously evaluates himself as a member of organized society under the obligation to contribute to its stability and growth all that his station in life and his talents will permit. That Washington is worthy of this eulogy no one will deny. Never was he so absorbed in business as to be unmindful of his citizenship. For fifteen years he took the time to perform regularly the duties of a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, serving until he went as a delegate to the first Congress. The only contested election was his first in 1759, when, following the custom of the day, refreshments were furnished the voters. The record is that he paid \$90 for a "hogshead and a barrel of punch, thirty-five gallons of wine, forty-three gallons of strong cider and dinner for his friends." In his accounts in the year 1767 is an item for serving thirty-one days as a representative from Fairfax County at ten shillings per day including ten days traveling and "ferriages" going and coming, £21.14.6.

In the House he served on all committees having to do

## THE MAN IN THE COMMUNITY

with the finances and taxes of the colony and with the landed interests. Bills for improvements in the administration of justice and for the equalizing of the laws had his support; the navigation of the Potomac and James rivers as trade routes, which he thought would be of tremendous value to Virginia, received his constant attention. December 4, 1769, the House ordered "that leave be given to bring in a bill for clearing and making navigable the river Potomack from the Great Falls of said river up to Port Cumberland and that Mr. Richard Lee and Mr. Washington do prepare and bring in the same." The approval of this bill opened the way for the organization of the Potomac Company, an enterprise to which Washington was to devote time, ability, and money.

The affairs of his neighborhood were not neglected, for we find him attending many county meetings. He presided over the meeting of the freeholders of Fairfax in 1774, when resolutions were passed setting forth the grievances of the colony and pledging assistance to the people of Boston. For a period of several years he was a judge of the County Court, the jurisdiction of which extended to civil actions over small accounts and to misdemeanors affecting the morals and manners of the county. This court had power to fix hotel rates and the charges for liquor and food; to punish vagrants and those charged with drunkenness and "profane swearing," and to try those indicted for failure "to attend church for two months." There is no record extant of what or how

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

many cases were before him, although occasional references in his diaries furnish proof that he exercised his power at times.

National affairs could not escape this consideration. To James Warren, he says:

“Let vigorous measures be adopted to punish speculators, forestallers and extortioners, to promote public and private economy and to encourage manufactories, measures of this sort, gone heartily into by the several states, would strike at once at the root of all our evils.”

In a letter to James Madison, he observes:

“Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth. When a people are oppressed with taxes and have cause to believe that there has been a misapplication of the money, they ill brook the language of despotism.”

Such was the man whom destiny had in training for mighty deeds.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BUSINESS GENERAL

THE Congress of 1774 brought together for the first time delegates from all the colonies. It was hardly a Congress, however, in the sense we now understand that term, but rather a meeting of "Committees." A convention in Virginia sent seven members, one of whom was Washington. This was the first time the Southerners had met with the Northerners in a general conference concerning their mutual interests and their trading rights in dispute with England. Washington was not rated a leader from the viewpoint of public speaking among the Virginians,—Peyton Randolph, Henry Lee, and Patrick Henry were the luminaries,—but as Henry said of him during the session: "If you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on the floor." If not an orator, he was peculiarly fitted by reason of his business experience and public interests to be a member of a conference having to deal with business matters mainly.

He was made chairman of the committee for recommending forts in the province of New York; of the committee for devising ways and means of securing ammunition and military stores; of the committee for estimating the amount

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

of money to be raised; and of the committee on rules and regulations for the army. Woodrow Wilson says: "He had headed committees and presided over popular meetings among his own neighbors in Fairfax and had been prompt to join them in speaking with high spirit against the course of the ministry in England. He had been forward in urging and punctiliously careful in practicing non-importation. He had declared Gage's conduct in Boston 'more becoming a Turkish bashaw than an English governor.' But he was a man of action rather than of parliaments."

Washington spent much time during the seven weeks of the session getting acquainted with the Northern delegates, particularly those from Massachusetts, John and Samuel Adams and others, adverse reports of whom had been sent him. The discussions of the session were almost solely concerned with the business and trade rights of the colonies. All that was accomplished was the formulation of an address to the King and the organization of an "American Association," for refusing to trade with England until the legislation affecting the colonials should be repealed.

Undoubtedly Washington caught in this meeting a new idea of the colonies. He must have pondered on his way home upon the ultimate necessity of a strong colonial union. The conception of a new nation began to mature in his mind. In his diary under date of May 1, 1774, he states that he went to church and fasted all day. This was the time when the news of the disturbances in Boston and other places

## THE BUSINESS GENERAL

was so alarming that it portended serious trouble with England.

Upon his return to Mount Vernon he became absorbed in his private affairs and especially in new plans for the opening of his western lands to settlers; also there still remained the burden of securing for the soldiers the grants on the Ohio, which were held up by the bad faith and negligence of the British Governor.

Writing to a friend who solicited him to act as guardian for his son, he says:

"For a year or two past there has been scarce a moment that I could properly call my own. What with my own business, my present ward's, my mother's, which is wholly in my hands, Colonel Fairfax's, Colonel Mercer's, and the little assistance I have undertaken to give in the management of my brother Augustine's concerns, together with the share I take in public affairs, I have been constantly engaged in writing letters, settling accounts, and negotiating one piece of business or another; by which means I have really been deprived of every kind of enjoyment, and had almost resolved to engage in no fresh matter till I had entirely wound up the old."

Nevertheless, busy as he was and weighted with responsibilities beyond most men, he was in his seat when the Congress of 1775 met under very different conditions from those of the preceding year. English authority had spurned the

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

colonial appeal; Lexington and Concord battles had taken place and the colonies were organizing and arming troops. Washington had been offered and had accepted the command of several companies of volunteer militiamen in Virginia. He appeared at this session of the Congress in his provincial uniform, which spoke his conclusion and denoted his readiness to act. He knew what was ahead and had said in accepting the command of these Virginia militiamen: "It is my full intention, to devote my life and fortune to the cause we are engaged in, if needful."

He was now the dominant figure in the Congress, and his leadership is evident; for this Congress proceeded to enact measures for the mustering and equipping of an army, the construction of fortifications, the gathering of munitions and supplies, the raising of money, the organization of a commissariat, and the restraint of the Indians upon the frontier.

Washington's experience and knowledge was superior to that of any man in the colonies on these matters. Others might write protests and declarations; but the business in hand was his to direct, for his mind had already formulated the plans. He seemed to know what had to be done and how to do it. When the necessity appeared for selecting a commander in chief for the army, he was in the mind of every delegate. John Adams, of Massachusetts, nominated him, saying he had "but one gentleman in mind, a gentleman from Virginia, who was among us and very well known

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to all of us; a gentleman whose skill and experience as an officer, whose independent fortune, great talents and excellent universal character, would command the approbation of all America, and unite the cordial exertion of all the Colonies better than any other person in the Union."

The "independent fortune" was a great qualification, for no salary could be voted adequate to the talents of such a man, although Congress fixed the pay of the Commander in Chief at \$500 per month. Expressly stipulating that he should receive only his expenses—of which he carefully kept account, rendering a complete statement to Congress at the close of the War—he accepted the position, saying: "I beg it to be remembered by every gentleman in this room, that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with." He wrote to his wife:

"You may believe me, my dear Patsy, when I assure you in the most solemn manner, that, so far from seeking the appointment, I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity—But as it has been a kind of destiny that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking is designed to answer some good purpose—It was entirely out of my power to refuse this appointment, without exposing my character to such censures as would



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

have reflected dishonor upon myself and given pain to my friends."

Placing Lund Washington, his nephew, in charge of his private business affairs, with special instructions as to what to cultivate on specific lands, and when and where to market the products; enjoining care in the breeding of the cattle, horses, and mules, he hastened to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the militiamen had congregated to oppose the British forces in Boston. Here he found virtually a mob of several thousand unorganized and undisciplined men, which he was expected, by some magic power, to form forthwith into a semblance of an army at least. Food, clothing, equipment, particularly ammunition, were sadly lacking, with no plans for their acquisition. Many of the men had enlisted for a very short period and were not disposed to take military duty seriously. Winter was at hand. There was no aroused popular interest. Congress was chaotic. Provincial authorities were lethargic. A disciplined and well-provisioned army was in front, ready to attack the Continental line at any time.

The Commander in Chief was forty-three—just in his prime. The past twenty-seven years had furnished a training, apparently for this very task. A master of men and affairs, imperative, imperturbable, and unhesitating, he set about a simultaneous solution of many problems. Letters were written by him to the Continental Congress, to the

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governors and legislators of the New England colonies, to subordinate officers in other places, to friends and influential citizens everywhere, giving information about the condition of the army and its needs, pleading for action, and commanding support of measures and plans outlined. Along with this education and arousing of public officials went the recruiting of soldiers; the pleading for re-enlistment, and for longer periods; the testing of officers; the mobilization of the army; the building of camps; the obtaining of all kinds of supplies by persuasion, purchase, or force. To make no difficulty lacking, the jealousies between officers and between the troops from different colonies had to be overcome.

The impossibility of securing a supply of powder made the situation perilous. English ships lying idle near the shore were heavily loaded with this necessity. Arming a few fast vessels with such equipment as was at hand, and manning them with Marblehead volunteers, Washington sent them forth under the very shadow of the British men-of-war to capture, as they did, very appreciable quantities of ammunition, as well as provisions. This was the embryonic American Navy.

Eight months were spent at these Herculean labors, while, thanks to a kind Providence, the enemy lay quiet in Boston. Many voices demanded that the Continental Army should give battle, but Washington withstood such clamor until he felt he was ready to strike the British quickly and effectively. His was the careful preparation of a patient and sagacious

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business genius for the successful launching of a great enterprise. When he did move in 1776 at Dorchester Heights, Boston could no longer be held by the British.

For two years thereafter, the American Army made no headway because of continued dissensions, jealousies between the colonies, a weak unresponsive Congress, and the inability to force long-term enlistment, which left the army in a continuous state of change. In addition, there arose a suppressed hostility to Washington—as Woodrow Wilson says, because of the charge that he was “an aristocrat, a slaveholder and an Episcopalian.” Yet through it all, the Commander in Chief held his course firmly and fearlessly. He presented to the country, in many letters and messages, with patriotic fervor, the conditions confronting the army. He was convinced that the militiamen would fight successfully, if provided with the means of subsistence. That he succeeded, through his restless and resistless energy, in keeping an army together, in feeding and clothing it, in equipping it with arms and ammunition, accounts for his final victories more than strategy and military science.

Another handicap to maintaining the morale of his forces was the low ebb of morals in the country, which was reflected in the character of the soldiers and particularly the line officers. Especially was this evident in 1780 after the treachery of Benedict Arnold and the execution of Major André. This condition troubled the Commander in Chief. It was undermining both army and country. He writes:

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"If I were called upon to draw a picture of the times and of men, from what I have seen, heard, and in part know, I should in one word say that idleness, dissipation, and extravagance seem to have laid fast hold of most of them; that speculation, peculation, and an insatiable thirst for riches seem to have got the better of every other consideration; . . . that disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day; whilst momentous concerns of an empire, an accumulating debt, ruined finances, depreciated money, and want of credit are but secondary consideration."

Concerning Washington's frame of mind at this time Henry Cabot Lodge says: "He had faced the enemy, the bleak winters, raw soldiers, and all the difficulties of impecunious government, with a cheerful courage that never failed. But the spectacle of widespread popular demoralization, of selfish scramble for plunder, and of feeble administration at the center of government, weighed upon him heavily."

The winter at Valley Forge seemed the culmination of disaster, but it proved to be otherwise. It brought to Washington the opportunity to put into action his plans for a regular army by reason of the loan negotiated with France and the experienced foreign officers who sought service in his army. Baron Steuben, a Prussian officer of great experience and ability, offered himself, and Washington made him Inspector General. Lafayette came to his aid. Nathaniel

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Greene became his Quartermaster, and an efficient supply system was put into operation. A large body of French soldiers came to put heart into the feeble American army and to render valiant service. Baron DeKalb, Count Pulaski, and Thaddeus Kosciusko joined their skill. From that time Washington was able to finance and utilize the plans he had formed for a Continental Army in the place of shifting bodies of militia.

It is not the purpose of this volume to trace his career as Commander in Chief—that has many times been written. Nor would we discredit his military genius, but the fact must be emphasized that Washington's business acumen and judgment contributed more to his success than his military genius. He was accused of adopting a "Fabian policy," of delaying the War, and of not being willing to risk battles; but this was a wise policy, for at no time did he have an army equipped to meet on an even footing the forces of the English. He could wait and "wear out a fuming and impatient enemy"; he could keep up a show of defense, rather than force the fighting.

Though the recrossing of the Delaware in December, 1776, and the successful attack at Trenton were raids rather than campaigns, they kept alive the possibility of offensive operations. Perhaps the capture of Burgoyne at Saratoga in October was due more to the obstacles which nature threw in the way of the English, and to the hardy audacity of the volunteers, than to the generalship of the officer in com-

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mand who was not chosen by Washington. Nevertheless throughout that campaign he was sending men and guns, and holding Clinton in New York.

Congress at last conferred upon him the powers of a dictator—"the most unlimited authority" was the phrase used; still the financial problem remained unsolved, as Congress was unable to force adequate revenue from the states. Washington successfully appealed to men of wealth like Robert Morris to advance funds for the army's needs, to which fund the General himself contributed \$65,000 during the War, for his personal expenses, being all of his available cash. It was no part of the duties of the head of the army to conduct the financing of the War, but necessity demanded that he assume that leadership.

The desperate winter at Valley Forge was due to the fact that the Continental Congress had practically ceased to function, and thereby the Commissary Department, which Washington had tried to organize, was left helpless. There was plenty of food in the country, but the machinery for getting it to the soldiers was lacking by reason of inadequate appropriations by Congress, and its refusal to exercise even what power the government had, to accomplish it. Washington's need at Valley Forge was not victory but food and clothing for a suffering army, which, with these necessities, was ready and willing to fight for independence to the last drop of blood.

Time and again Washington forcibly took supplies from

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the country around him in defiance of governmental authority and regardless of consequences. He had selected Valley Forge for his winter quarters because it was near Philadelphia where he could watch the British; and it was also in the heart of a very prosperous agricultural region which would afford food necessities, particularly wheat and meat. Soon after settling there, he discovered that the farmers would not deal with his officers and were sending their cattle and food stuffs, especially wheat, to the British in Philadelphia, who paid them in gold. Most of these farmers were not hostile to the Continental Army but were utterly indifferent to the cause it represented and proposed to make all the profit possible out of the market suddenly opened to them; they did not want Continental paper money of uncertain value. Many of them were, however, outspoken Royalists.

In this crisis of the War, Washington issued an order that all the farmers within a distance of seventy miles from Valley Forge must thresh one half of their wheat by the first of February and the other half by the first of March, under penalty of having it all seized and paid for as straw. The grain was to be commandeered by the army officers. Some of the farmers actually burned their crops rather than obey the command. There was no alternative, since the government's failure, but to provision the army off the surrounding country. Regular scouting officers went everywhere, compelling the unwilling to share crops and cattle

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with the soldiers. Washington's instruction to these officers was to keep strict account where actual payment could not be made to the farmer for what was taken, so that ultimately everyone would be paid. Naturally there were many complaints; answering the charges of the illegality of his actions made in Congress, the General simply stated the necessity which warranted such conduct, adding: "A character to lose, an estate to forfeit, the inestimable blessing of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my excuse."

The historian revels in the recounting of battles; but behind these in any great war, though less interesting to relate, are the preparations and the organization of forces upon which all fighting depends. The short-time voluntary enlistments, necessitating a constant influx of raw recruits to be only partially trained; the hesitation of Congress to make adequate appropriation for arms and provisions, lest the people protest from fear of military tyranny; and the public feeling that patriotism was all that was needed in a group of men to wring success,—these constitute the background and real economic difficulties with which Washington had to contend.

General Upton says, in his book on "The Military Policy of the United States": "Without pausing to discover the secret of the defense of Bunker Hill, the mistaken conviction seized the public mind that the militia were invincible and that patriotism was the sole qualification for a soldier's



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calling—a fallacy which paralyzed the military legislation of the Revolution and constantly jeopardized our liberties by inducing the political leaders of the time to rely too confidently upon raw and undisciplined levies.”

Washington wrote to the President of Congress after the disastrous battle of Camden, “What we need is a good army, not a large one.” He saw the need of a regular Continental Army, well organized and disciplined, that would go through and “carry on.” He desired also to mobilize the materials and the finances of the country as well as the men.

General Cornwallis said, when proposing a toast to Washington at a dinner by the York river in 1781, “When the illustrious part that your Excellency has borne in the long and arduous contest becomes matter of history, fame will gather your brightest laurels rather from the banks of the Delaware than those of the Chesapeake.”

After five years of experience in the War, Washington analyzed the situation in a most clear and convincing manner in a letter to the President of Congress, August 20, 1781:

“Had we formed a permanent army in the beginning, which, by the continuance of the same men in service, had been capable of discipline, we never should have had to retreat with a handful of men across the Delaware in 1776, trembling for the fate of America, which nothing but the infatuation of the enemy could have saved; we should not have remained all the succeeding winter at their mercy, with

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sometimes scarcely a sufficient body of men to mount the ordinary guards, liable at every moment to be dissipated, if they had only thought proper to march against us; we should not have been under the necessity of fighting Brandywine, with an unequal number of raw troops, and afterwards of seeing Philadelphia fall a prey to a victorious army; we should not have been at Valley Forge with less than half the force of the enemy, destitute of everything, in a situation neither to resist nor to retire; we should not have seen New York left with a handful of men, yet an overmatch for the main army of these States, while the principal part of their force was detached for the reduction of two of them; we should not have found ourselves this spring so weak as to be insulted by 5,000 men, unable to protect our baggage and magazines, their security depending on a good countenance and a want of enterprise in the enemy; we should not have been the greatest part of the war inferior to the enemy, indebted for our safety to their inactivity, enduring frequently the mortification of seeing inviting opportunities to ruin them pass unimproved for want of a force which the country was completely able to afford, and of seeing the country ravaged, our towns burnt, the inhabitants plundered, abused, murdered, with impunity from the same cause.

“Nor have the ill effects been confined to the military line. A great part of the embarrassments in the civil departments flow from the same source. The derangement

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of our finances is essentially to be ascribed to it. The expenses of the war and the paper emissions have been greatly multiplied by it. We have had a great part of the time two sets of men to feed and pay—the discharged men going home and the levies coming in. This was more remarkably the case in 1775 and 1776. The difficulty and cost of engaging men have increased at every successive attempt, till among the present lines we find there are some who have received \$150 in specie for five months' service, while our officers are reduced to the disagreeable necessity of performing the duties of drill sergeants to them, with this mortifying reflection annexed to the business, that by the time they have taught these men the rudiments of a soldier's duty their services will have expired and the work recommenced with a new set. The consumption of provisions, arms, accoutrements, and stores of every kind has been doubled in spite of every precaution I could use, not only from the cause just mentioned, but from the carelessness and licentiousness incident to militia and irregular troops. Our discipline also has been much hurt, if not ruined, by such constant changes. The frequent calls upon the militia have interrupted the cultivation of the land, and of course have lessened the quantity of its produce, occasioned a scarcity and enhanced the prices. In an army so unstable as ours, order and economy have been impracticable. No person who has been a close observer of the progress of our affairs can doubt that our currency has depreciated without com-

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parison more rapidly from the system of short enlistments than it would have done otherwise.

"There is every reason to believe that the war has been protracted on this account. Our opposition being less, the successes of the enemy have been greater. The fluctuation of the army kept alive their hopes, and at every period of the dissolution of a considerable part of it they have flattered themselves with some decisive advantages. Had we kept a permanent army on foot the enemy could have had nothing to hope for, and would in all probability have listened to terms long since."

General John McAuley Palmer in his recent book entitled "Washington, Lincoln and Wilson," sets forth a recently discovered letter written by Washington in 1783, outlining a policy of national defence. This letter was written at the request of Alexander Hamilton, then Chairman of a Congressional Committee having this subject under consideration. General Palmer says: "At the very beginning, Washington had proposed an American military system which contained in it all of the desirable features of the system we have finally attained after more than a century of spasmodic, painful and costly evolution. Every important feature of our new organization since the World War was contained in its simplest and most economical form in the military policy which Washington first formulated at his headquarters in Newburgh during the month of April, 1783."

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Was it generalship or statesmanship which solved Washington's difficulties? Both perhaps in a measure; but the real source of his power was his clear vision and his staying qualities in the promotion of a great undertaking which depended upon organization. His Council of Generals might decide upon the strategy of battle and the army movements, but Washington had to plan their accomplishment. To hold a half-clad, shoeless, hungry, and discouraged army together, as he did after his enforced retreat into New Jersey chased by Cornwallis, demanded more than military genius. President Coolidge in his speech at Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 3, 1925, referring to Washington, the General, said correctly: "We see, moreover, the qualities of a great man of business which he brings to serve the vast task of organizing and equipping his armies."

W. E. Woodward says: "The fighter who stays in the ring as long as he can stand on his feet, the man who keeps his business alive while his clothes are threadbare, and his stomach empty, the captain who clings to his ship while there is a plank left afloat—that is Washington."

One might well conclude that under the arduous military duties of the Commander in Chief his private affairs were forgotten, but such was not the case. The regular reports which came from the manager of his estates were carefully studied. Instruction and advice about operations were constantly sent. Amid the worries at Cambridge he wrote Lund Washington: "Spinning should go forward

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with all possible dispatch. I much approve of your sowing wheat in clean ground, although you should be late in doing it."

The far-seeing eye for good investments was never dimmed. In the interim of about three weeks between the surrender of Cornwallis in October 1783 and the termination of peace negotiations, Washington made a horseback trip with General George Clinton into the Mohawk valley in upper New York to buy some land. A limited introduction to this region during his military campaigns had impressed him with its future, lying as it did between the Hudson river and the Great Lakes beyond the northern end of the mountain range. He purchased for \$9,000 six thousand and fifty acres in the Mohawk valley, Montgomery County, New York, declaring that some day the great route of travel would be that way. He was compelled to borrow \$2,500 at seven per cent interest from General Clinton to complete the deal. That he foresaw the future is evident from the fact that the Erie Canal now traverses the land and the New York Central Railroad built its course that way. In 1793 he sold two thirds of this land for a net gain of over \$2,500 and at the time of his death he valued the remainder at \$6,000. He joined General Clinton in an unsuccessful effort to buy a large tract of land at Saratoga, where he predicted a great future for its celebrated springs, and he also tried to buy the land on which Fort Schuyler stood.

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Robert Morris, who gave so readily and lavishly of his wealth to the support of the Continental army, and who was Washington's close friend, knowing his interest in land deals, approached him at the close of the War to become interested in the North American Land Company. This company was organized to purchase six million acres of land in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Kentucky, to sell at a handsome profit to small speculators and settlers at fifty cents an acre. Washington declined, because this speculation was too gigantic and did not portend real development of the land for productive purposes. He said to Morris: "You are too old and had better retire, rather than engage in such extensive concerns." Morris replied: "Your advice is proof of that wisdom and prudence which governs all your words and actions; but, my dear general, I can never do things in the small; I must be either a man or a mouse."

This company later purchased over a million acres of land in western New York at sixteen cents an acre; but the whole scheme failed and Morris was thrown into the debtor's prison in Philadelphia, where Washington visited him in 1798.

At the close of the war, Congress distributed rewards of land beyond the Alleghenies to the officers and soldiers of the Continental Army, but Washington refused to accept any allotment to himself, steadily adhering to his purpose of no enrichment from his service to his country.

## THE BUSINESS GENERAL

There was no alloy in his love of the new nation which had arisen from the smoke of war—only fear that it might be such a weakling as to fall in the struggle to live. In the midst of the frightful condition which colonial rivalry for honors created, he wrote:

“I have labored, ever since I have been in the service, to discourage all kinds of local attachments and distinction of country, dominating the whole by the greater name of American, but I have found it impossible to overcome prejudice and, under the new establishment, I conceive it best to stir up emulation.”



## CHAPTER IX

### HOME BUILDER

ON November 2, 1783, General Washington bade farewell to his officers. Tears were shed at the parting, for he held the affection of his associates, yet in his heart was a deep note of exultation. This was due not so much to the successful termination of the war as to the fact that a dream frustrated through seven long cruel years might now come true. He could return to Mount Vernon and spend the rest of his days in "husbandry." For some time every spare moment had been given to the studying of books on architecture, the drawing of plans for remodeling his house and landscaping the surrounding grounds. The soul was to have its freedom and its expression in this work.

Upon his return, transformations came like magic to the Virginia home. One of his first letters was to a Mr. Rumney of Alexandria, then en route to England; it relates to the magnificent colonnade at Mount Vernon, a proof of architectural genius.

"General Washington presents his compliments to Mr. Rumney—would esteem it as a particular favor if Mr. Rumney would make the following enquiries as soon as

220.

June — 1784. —

should be exceedingly happy to see him, when-  
ever it can be made convenient to you both. —

With sincere esteem & regard  
I am dear Sir &c

Mount Vernon }  
30<sup>th</sup> June 1784.

G. Washington

Es. W. John Rumney junr. —

General Washington presents his com-  
pliments to W. Rumney — would esteem it as  
a particular favor if Mr. Rumney would  
make the following enquiries as soon as con-  
venient after his arrival in England, & com-  
municate the result of them by the Packet or  
any other safe & speedy conveyance to this Country. —

1<sup>st</sup> The terms upon which the best kind of white-  
marble Flag Stone, black & white in equal quan-  
tities, could be delivered at the General's land-  
ing or at the Port of Alexandria by the super-  
ficial foot — with the freight & every other inci-  
dental charge included — (The Stone to be  
2½ inches thick, or thereabouts, & exactly a  
foot square each kind (i.e. black & white) — to  
have a well polished face & good joints; so as to  
be used as a seat of floor may be made for the Colonel in  
the front of his house. Stone thus prepared  
must be carefully packed, otherwise the face &  
edges would be damaged — the expense of  
which should also be taken into the acct. —

2<sup>d</sup> Upon what terms the common black  
marble, (black & white if to be had, & of the same  
dimensions) could be had, delivered as above. —

3<sup>d</sup> As the General has been informed of a  
very cheap kind of marble, good in quality, which  
is to be had at, or in the neighbourhood of  
Bastons in France, he would thank Mr. Rum-  
ney, if it should fall in his way, to institute  
the

# WASHINGTON'S KNOWLEDGE AS BUILDER

Minute details and business exactitude in an order for tiles for



## HOME BUILDER

convenient, after his arrival in England; and communicate the result of them by the Packet, or any other safe and expeditious conveyance to this country.

“First. The terms upon which the best kind of Whitehaven Flag stone—black & white in equal quantities—could be delivered at the Port of Alexandria by the superficial foot, workmanship, freight & every other incidental charge included.—The stone to be 2½ Inches, or thereabouts, thick; and exactly a foot square—each kind. To have a rich polished face, and good joints so as that a neat floor may be made therewith.

“2nd. Upon which terms the common Irish Marble (black & white if to be had)—same dimensions, could be delivered as above.

“3rd. As the General has been informed of a very cheap Kind of Marble, good in quality at or in the neighborhood of Ostend, he would thank Mr. Rumney, if it should fall in his way, to institute an enquiry into this also.

“On the Report of Mr. Rumney, the General will make his ultimate determination; for which reason he prays him to be precise and exact. The piazza or Colonnade for which this is wanted as a floor is ninety-two feet, eight inches, by twelve feet eight inches within the margin, or border that surrounds it. Over and above the quantity here mentioned, if the above Flags are cheap—or a cheaper kind of hard Stone could be had, he would get as much as would lay floors in the Circular Colonnades, or covered ways at the

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

wings of the House—each of which at the outer curve, is 38 feet in length by 7 feet 2 Inches in breadth, within the margin or border as aforesaid.

“The General being in want of a House Joiner & Bricklayer who understand their respective trades perfectly, would thank Mr. Rumney for enquiring into the terms upon which such workmen might be Engaged for two or three year; (the time of service, to commence upon the Ship’s arrival at Alexandria,) a shorter term than two years would not answer, because foreigners generally have a seasoning; which with other interruptions too frequently waste the greater part of the first year—more to the disadvantage of the employer than the Employed.—Bed, board & tools to be found by the former, clothing by the latter.

“If two men of the above Trades and of orderly and quiet deportment could be obtained for twenty-five or even thirty pounds sterling, per annum each (estimating dollars at 4/6) the General, rather than sustain the loss of Time necessary for communication, would be obliged to Mr. Rumney for entering into proper obligatory articles of agreement on his behalf with them and sending them by the first vessel bound to this Port.”

On the opposite page is a reduced diagram of Washington’s original plan for the arrangement of the grounds and the construction of outbuildings.

## HOME BUILDER

All who have made the pilgrimage to Mount Vernon know what was accomplished. The mansion was enlarged, a banquet room being added; the imposing piazza fronting the river, for the floor of which Rumney's aid had been sought, was built; the observatory, kitchen, laundry, and

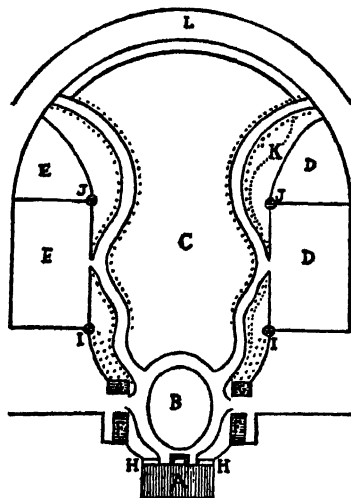


DIAGRAM OF GROUNDS AND BUILDINGS

A, The mansion; B, Oval grass-plot; C, The lawn; DD, Flower-gardens; EE, Vegetable-gardens; FF, Kitchen and laundry; GG, House-servants' quarters; HH, Curved colonnades; II, Water-closets; JJ, Seed-houses; K, Carriage-way; L, Outside road.

connecting colonnades, as they now appear, were erected and the second story completed with the cupola. In all these improvements, beauty, as well as utility and durability, was considered.

Washington had great love for trees. Beauty in the forms and colors of nature's flora appealed to him, and he

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sought far and wide for unusual varieties of trees and shrubs. Many were imported from other lands, and those sent by admiring friends were planted by his own hands and carefully nurtured. The diaries have numerous entries concerning the location, manner of planting and care given them. Among the large variety of trees mentioned by him are the shell bark hickory, service trees, black haw, locust, mahogany, civil or "sower" orange, palmetto royal, "spruce pine," black gum, cedar, hawthorn, physic nut, pistachio, Spanish chestnut, piramedical cyprus, French and English walnuts, apricot, hemlock, Mediterranean pine, lime, linden, elm, sassafras, dogwood, red bud, "aspan," poplar, mulberry, weeping and yellow willow, live oak, water oak, yew, magnolia, papaw, "frinze," horse chestnut, tree box, Kentucky coffee, maple, four kinds of cherry trees, four of plum, sixteen of pears and of apple trees.

## CHAPTER X

### WESTERN NAVIGATION

THE rehabilitation of his farms, live stock, and industrial enterprises added zest to Washington's days. It was inevitable, however, in the midst of all these affairs, that his mind should advert to his western lands and the western country with which he was so familiar. Independently of his holdings, he contemplated the great West as portending weal or woe for the new nation. It was well known that many settlers had gone into that region during the years of the war and that developments had started. When Washington first became interested in that wild territory, Virginia was in possession of all the western country north of her southern line. Her charter read "up into the land throughout from sea to sea, west and northwest." Maryland had made her acceptance of the Articles of Confederation conditioned upon all western territory beyond the mountains being ceded to the Confederation. Virginia, accordingly, ceded to the United States in 1783 all the lands she claimed lying north of the Ohio, and the other claimant colonies had followed, so that the Confederation had become sovereign over this vast region, but without power to govern or dispose of it.

Benjamin Franklin had done much to promote settle-



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ments in this region. His Vandalia Company had acquired the properties of the Ohio Company and had been very active, as Washington well knew, in selling lands and securing money for development. Franklin had gone to England to secure permission to purchase a vast acreage from the Indians. George Croghan and Sir William Johnson had acquired a million acres or more and established towns and industries. Croghan was the greatest land speculator of the times and had established a great trading post on Lake Erie. The Penns had opened a land office for the sale of their vast holdings, and thousands of pioneers had been sent west through them. Speculation had been wild and furious until the Boston Tea Party broke the spell; and now Washington felt there would be a return of interest and the population of this region would again be astir, drawing to its virgin lands thousands more of the released soldiers.

The General had not been in sympathy with Croghan's mammoth promotions and, though strongly urged, had refused to join him. He was also opposed to the attempt of the Penns to encroach upon the territory claimed by Virginia; nevertheless this vast West with all its resources and people were part of his America, and he was determined to assist in its proper development.

As the population of the states increased and the commercial necessities grew, Washington realized that expansion could take but one course, and to open up that region

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was the first and dominant issue for the country at large. The prime requisite was transportation routes. A water-way would supply the easiest and quickest relief. Having seen that some day a great water-way, utilizing the rivers, would course across the Mohawk country connecting the Hudson and the Great Lakes, the desire arose to find, before the northern route was available, a water route via Virginia by extending the Potomac and James rivers to a connection through locks with the Youghiogheny, Conemaugh, or Great Kanawha on the west and thence to the Ohio and on to the Great Lakes and Detroit, and likewise down the Ohio to the Mississippi. Thus the trade from the vast Northwest would be directed over this southern route to the great benefit of the southern cities.

Washington had advocated the western extension of navigation of the Potomac river for twenty years or more, but interest in the project had lain dormant during the war. Now there arose an urge to revive this enterprise, necessitating a preliminary investigation by himself, to find the best route over the mountain barrier, which, when found to his satisfaction, could be publicly advocated in support of the extension of the river's use; also he desired to see his Western lands. Accordingly in October and November 1784, shortly after returning to Mount Vernon, the General made a journey to this western country, the result of which was to bring him again actively into public affairs. The happy days at Mount Vernon were to be marred.

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The diary of this trip is most interesting and informative, disclosing his careful investigation and marvelous grasp of the situation. It has been published with comments by Archer B. Hulbert, in his "Washington and the West." Although places of memorable experiences during the French War were visited, no reference to his emotions or recollections of former days are to be found in the diary. His mind could not be moved by memories from the problems upon which he was so intent. Mere sentiment, outside Mount Vernon, had little influence over his practical mind at any time.

Finding squatters on some of his land, a lawsuit had to be instituted to clear the titles. These alleged settlers asserted that they had possession of the land before Washington made a legal survey. They admitted that Crawford had done so, but denied that he had any right to make it, even as agent for Washington. The surveyor's office had a record of this survey antedating the squatters. This land was part of that secured under Governor Dinwiddie's allotment, and Washington felt entitled to be decreed the owner, as most valuable service had been rendered for it. A meeting was held with all the claimants before starting legal action. Washington offered to sell them the land at 25 shillings per acre in three annual payments, or to give them leases for ninety-nine years at an annual rental of ten pounds per year. Each of the thirteen claimants refused both offers and announced that they would stand suit, so

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there was no other recourse. There is some evidence to warrant the conclusion that these claimants were land speculators who hoped to be bought off at a handsome figure by the General. The statement of his claim of title and the instructions to his attorney prove Washington to have had an unusual grasp of the facts necessary to apply the principles of law he successfully asserted.

From inquiry and actual travel, he found three possible trans-Allegheny routes: one following up the Susquehanna river on the east to the Juniata tributary descended to the Conemaugh; another following the James connected with the Great Kanawha; and a third through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. History has verified his conclusions, for the first is the highway of the present Pennsylvania Railroad; the second, of the Baltimore and Ohio; the third, of the Chesapeake and Ohio.

Learning that Pennsylvania had jurisdiction over the Monongahela and its branches, one of which was the Cheat river, which it was desirable to use for some distance, and knowing that State to be adverse to cooperating with Virginia and Maryland in the use of the Potomac, he had difficulty in finding a way to connect with the Cheat river outside Pennsylvania jurisdiction.

A few days after returning from this seven-hundred-mile horseback trip, he wrote a detailed account to the Governor of Virginia concerning what he had found, calling attention to the likelihood of the interior trade going to the Spaniards

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and urging that action be taken to prevent this by the construction of a water route he was prepared to suggest. Someone has said that on this journey he "felt the impulse of manifest Destiny."

"I shall take the liberty now, my dear Sir, to suggest a matter which would (if I am not too short-sighted a politician) mark your administration as an important era in the annals of this country, if it should be recommended by you and adopted by the Assembly."

The report gives the Governor a survey of the Western country water-ways, points out the routes across the mountains and compares them with those of Pennsylvania to the West, and demonstrates how the trade would be drawn to the Potomac river, to the benefit of Virginia and Maryland and thus stimulate the whole eastern commerce. It reads like a modern engineer's report, on opening up trade channels.

"If this is fair reasoning, it ought to follow as a consequence, that we should do our part towards opening the communication for the fur and peltry trade of the Lakes, and for the produce of the country which lies within, and which will, as soon as matters are settled with the Indians, and the terms on which Congress means to dispose of the land, found to be favorable, be settled faster than any other ever was or anyone could imagine."

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He proposed that a commission be authorized by the Assembly, to survey the James and Potomac rivers from tide-water to their sources for the purpose of discovering the best portage to the Ohio, thence to the Muskingum and up that river to the carrying place to the Cuyahoga and down that river to Lake Erie and thence to Detroit, which was correctly discerned as a location for a great commercial center.

In this communication of 1784 is related the discovery of a man named Rumsey who was "working boats against the stream by mechanical powers principally." Rumsey was applying power, in a very crude way, to move the boat. This struck Washington as an idea of infinite possibilities, and, as in every case where he saw utility in something new, he heralded it abroad.

Later, on March 3, 1785, referring to Rumsey, he writes:

"A view of his model, with the explanation, removed the principal doubt I ever had in mind of the practicability of propelling against a stream by the aid of mechanical power; but as he wanted to avail himself of my introduction of it to the public attention, I chose previously to see the actual performance of the model in a descending stream before I passed my certificate; and having done so, all my doubts were satisfied."

Writing to Chevalier D. C. Chastellux about his trip, he says:

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"I could not help taking an extensive view of the vast inland navigation of these United States, from maps and the information of others; and could not but be struck with the immense extent and importance of it, and with the goodness of that Providence, which has dealt its favors to us with so profuse a hand."

In March 1784, about three months after his return, a letter goes to Thomas Jefferson on the subject of the Potomac river:

"More than ten years ago, I was struck with the importance of it; and, despairing of any aid from the public, I became a principal mover of a bill to empower a number of subscribers to undertake at their own expense, on conditions which were expressed, the extension of the navigation from tide water to Will's Creek, about one hundred and fifty miles."

The probability of a separation of the two populations seemed to him imminent. He declared that the western settlers stood upon a pivot, that the touch of a feather would turn them either way. "That is toward the Spanish at the mouth of the Mississippi or back over the mountain to the eastern water courses connecting in trade with the Colonies." The people in western North Carolina, now the State of Tennessee, formed a temporary state in 1784 and opened negotiations with Spain for an alliance, as they had no out-

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let to the sea except the Mississippi river controlled by that foreign country and had lost hope of the National government ever securing any favorable concessions from Spain. The state of affairs led Washington to the conclusion that:

“There is nothing which binds one country or one State to another but interest. Without this cement the Western inhabitants, who more than probably will be composed in a great degree of foreigners, can have no predilection for us, and a commercial connection is the only tie we can have upon them.”

Being convinced therefore that prompt action was needed and believing that “*interest*”—that is, trade and commerce—was the only medium through which the great consummation could be engineered, he deliberately revived the suggestion of the Potomac Company. Jay later proposed to concede control of the Mississippi to Spain, in exchange for certain commercial advantages desired by the Atlantic Coast shipping interests, but Washington had the far-sighted vision. His deep and patriotic purpose will be seen as we disclose what happened.

Hulbert names Washington the first expansionist and declares that his plan for holding the West through commercial relations was “a pioneer idea, instinct with genius,” and “Washington’s advocacy of it marks him as the first commercial American, the first man typical of the America that was to be.”



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Since 1762 the extension of the Potomac river navigation had been under discussion in Virginia, and consequently Washington had no trouble in securing the cooperation of the leading men of that state in the proposed formation of the Potomac Company; but in order to placate land owners along the James river and obtain their aid, it was deemed advisable also to propose a charter for the James River Company. Washington, however, gave his particular attention to the Potomac Company. If, as has been charged, he was seeking merely a route to reach his own lands, he would have decided upon the James-Kanawha route, for his holdings were largely that way. The selection of the one he advocated proves that he had at heart the interest of his countrymen at large, with whose welfare he would accept his own ultimate benefit.

Virginia and Maryland each had portions of the Potomac river within its territorial jurisdiction, and Virginia had all of the lower Chesapeake Bay within her borders. Consequently joint approval of a charter for the company was required. Washington, appearing before the Virginia Assembly in 1784, where he was received with great honor, presented the proposition, requesting a charter for the Potomac Company, and also suggested the appointment of a commission to urge the matter upon the Maryland Assembly. Without delay the Virginia Assembly responded favorably. Washington was made chairman of the commission. He prepared the way for Maryland's acquiescence

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by a long letter about the project to Madison, who was then influential in the Maryland Assembly. In December, 1784, he personally presented the proposal to the Maryland body, which promptly appointed a committee to confer with the Virginia delegation. Soon thereafter a favorable report was made: "It is the opinion of this conference that the proposal to establish a company for opening the River Potomac merits the approbation of and deserves to be patronized by Virginia and Maryland."

The report further recommended that each state subscribe for fifty shares of the stock as "such subscription would evince to the public the opinion of the legislature of the practicability and great utility of the plan and that the example would encourage individuals to embark in the measure."

Both assemblies then approved the charter, which was a very detailed document, containing the general principles of corporation grants which are today to be found in the articles of incorporation of every company. The Virginia Legislature subscribed for fifty shares of stock to be given to Washington as a tribute to his services in the matter; these he declined to accept, and the Assembly then modified its subscription by providing that the shares should go as Washington might direct in his lifetime or in his will.

The James River Company, to develop navigation on that river, was also chartered by Virginia, but never did any active work. Virginia likewise subscribed for one hundred

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shares of the stock in this company and in addition one hundred shares to be given to Washington. The same modification to comply with Washington's desire in reference to this gift was made.

The capital stock of the Potomac Company was fixed at five hundred shares to be sold on the basis of \$444<sup>4</sup>/<sub>9</sub> per share. Each share was evidenced by the subscription and was deemed real estate, and transfers were made by deed. The books for subscriptions were thrown open to the public; and by May 403 shares, or more than half of the total, as required by the charter, had been subscribed, and the first meeting of the stockholders was held. Washington, who had agreed to and did invest \$10,000, was elected President, refusing salary or any bonus stock. The directors, who were prominent men of the two states, decided to divide the work into two sections—an upper and lower, with the Shenandoah Falls as the dividing line. James Rumsey was made manager of the work of clearing away the falls and the company began operations. A wage scale above the ordinary wages of the day was authorized because of the hard labor required. Washington gave personal attention to the welfare of the laborers and had general supervision of construction.

The white laborers employed on this high wage scale soon made demands for still higher pay and threatened to strike. Hearings were had before the board, Washington presiding, and every effort was made to adjust matters satis-

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factorily. The president repeatedly visited the workings, but finding it impossible to get the men to continue on what was felt to be a reasonable pay, all whites were discharged and only negroes employed. Washington issued an order that "the negroes are to come well clothed or to be supplied with what may be deficient." Comfortable living quarters were provided for the workmen; they were well provisioned, and the sick or injured cared for. Michael Bowan, superintendent of rock blasting, being injured by an explosion of gunpowder, the president had the board authorize proper care and support for him while incapacitated.

From lack of proper engineering, many changes had to be made in the plans; delays occurred from bad weather and unexpected hardships; public interest lagged, subscriptions were not paid promptly, many not at all, even the payment of legislative appropriations was neglected. All of these things Washington continually tried to overcome, sending frequent reports to the stockholders.

After four years of struggling with the problems of the company, he refused reelection as president at the annual meeting of stockholders in 1788. The directors neglected to name a successor for a year, in the hope that conditions would change so that Washington might accept, but his elevation to the presidency of the United States made this impossible. His personal interest in the enterprise was never lost, however, for amid the arduous duties of his presidential days he endeavored to keep it afloat.

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After his withdrawal as president, the affairs of the company went badly. Ten extensions of the charter were made between 1786 and 1820 by the states; most of them because of Washington's personal appeal. \$729,380 was spent by the company, but progress was slow and ineffectual. A committee of investigation appointed by the assemblies of the interested states in 1822 reported that, "there was no reasonable ground to expect that they would be able to effect the objects of their incorporation; that they have not only expended their capital stock and the tolls received, with the exception of a small dividend of Five Dollars on each share declared in 1802, but had incurred a heavy debt which their resources would never enable them to discharge; that the floods and freshets nevertheless gave the only navigation that was enjoyed; that the whole time when produce and goods could be stream bourne on the Potomac in the course of an entire year, did not exceed forty-five days; that it would be imprudent and inexpedient to give further aid to the Potomac Company."

We must now return to our story of how Washington used the Potomac Company to the accomplishment of a great patriotic purpose. The directors shortly after its organization, following an inspection trip over the proposed route, issued a prospectus for general circulation. It was eagerly read by an interested public, not only locally but throughout the other states. This started a discussion upon the general subject of water transportation to the West among

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the business interests everywhere, as Washington intended it should. A visitor at Mount Vernon in the autumn of 1785 found Washington "quite pleased at the idea of the Baltimore merchants laughing at him, and saying it was a ridiculous plan, and would never succeed. They begin now, says the General, to look a little serious about the matter, as they know it must hurt their commerce amazingly."

The debate centered upon the question as to the shortest and best route by which to join the Ohio and the Atlantic. Philadelphia declared it was shorter over its Susquehanna route, while New York asserted a canalization of the rivers between the Hudson and Lake Erie furnished the best way. Pennsylvania formed a "Society for Promoting the Improvement of Roads and Inland Navigation." Later New York passed "An Act for establishing and opening Lock Navigation," and thereafter the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company began the construction of the Mohawk-Lake Oneida route to the Great Lakes, which is now known as the Erie Canal. The leader of the New York movement was Elkanah Watson, who personally conferred with Washington on the subject and received every encouragement from him. Engineers of the New York company later, at Washington's suggestion, inspected the Potomac Company's workings.

As president of the company, Washington kept matters ever astir. He was in many respects a natural promoter. He

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demanding that Maryland and Virginia adopt regulations for the use of the river and give the proper concessions to the company's craft, assisting, as well, with continued appropriations for the work. Commissioners from each state were accordingly appointed to formulate plans and laws for joint action in control of the river and the bay in the promotion and protection of trade. The first meeting of these commissioners was called in March 1785, at Alexandria; but owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the Virginia members, they did not appear. Washington invited those present to adjourn to Mount Vernon, to await the arrival of the Virginian absentees. Thereupon, in the quiet of that beautiful home, under the eye and influence of that mighty man, President of the Potomac Company, these commissioners spent four days, at the end of which time they unanimously agreed that the question was too large, involving as it did too many interests, for their two states to decide. It was evident to them that Pennsylvania had an equal interest because its trade on the Ohio would be lessened if drawn to the headwaters of the Potomac, and its opposition would in all probability raise serious complications. Pennsylvania must therefore be invited to send commissioners. Washington suggested that if these states were to confer upon trade conditions and the development of a transportation system which would concern other states, why should not the others be invited and the conference be made a general one. He had foreseen this

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necessity and had quietly and unostentatiously led these men to this conclusion. When they adjourned, each commissioner agreed to report to his respective assembly their conclusions, but they did not report the larger idea which Washington had brought to their minds. They recommended only that "besides co-operating with each other and with Pennsylvania in opening a way to the Western waters, Virginia and Maryland should adopt a uniform system of duties and of commercial regulations, and should establish uniform rules regarding their currency."

Following their respective approval of the report, Virginia and Maryland entered into an agreement known as the "Compact of 1785," in reference to the matters suggested. Bradley Johnson says this agreement was "the germ of the constitution of 1789 and it came from the brain and heart of Washington."

This compact was in direct violation of the Articles of the Confederation which prohibited the states from "entering into any treaty, alliance, or confederation." By this compact Virginia and Maryland agreed to make all regulations for commerce or use of ports on the Potomac on the basis of equal rights. The state flag covered the cargo, and each state retained jurisdiction over crimes committed by its citizens. The records of judicial proceedings in one state were to be received as evidence in the other. Provision was made for the accession of Pennsylvania and Delaware to its terms. Congress was helpless to act. If other



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states joined the arrangement, enough would soon be united to defy the Confederation and force a new form of government. Such was probably the unexpressed reasoning of the president of the Potomac Company. A movement had been started which could not be checked.

Washington, with broadening vision, declared to a member of Congress, about this time, referring to the great West:

“For my own part, I wish sincerely that every door of that country may be set wide open, and the commercial intercourse with it rendered as free and easy as possible. . . . and we shall be deficient in foresight and wisdom if we neglect the means of effecting it.”

We are impressed at this period with the expanding of Washington's mind. Striking out originally for a route to be exclusively within the control of Virginia and probably Maryland, he had seen the feasibility and inevitability of the construction of the other routes and the tremendous advantage to the country which would ensue, not only commercially but in creating an active spirit of unity. It was only by a system of internal communication that the bonds of the union could be strengthened.

The Maryland Assembly, in acting upon the report of its commissioners, had taken a broader view than Virginia by declaring that Delaware should construct a canal from Chesapeake Bay to the Delaware river in order to make the

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proposed system fully serve its purpose; and, inasmuch as the purpose was to give an added transportation service which would help the country generally, that all the states should be invited to join the next conference of commissioners. This action was probably due to the fact that Governor Bowdoin of Massachusetts had already suggested to his legislature that a general conference of the states be held in the interest of trade; and to the further fact that Spain was discussing closing the Mississippi to the trade of the states in the West.

The Virginia Assembly unhesitatingly agreed to Maryland's suggestion and called a general conference to be held in Annapolis on the first Monday in September 1786, to "consider and recommend such additions to the powers of Congress as might conduce to a better regulation of trade." All of the states were asked to send delegates to the conference. Washington placed all his influence back of this action.

When the conference assembled under this call, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York were alone represented. Maryland had for some reason failed to appoint commissioners. New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, and North Carolina had appointed, but none of the commissioners came. Connecticut, South Carolina, and Georgia ignored the call. New Jersey had directed her commissioners to "consider how far a uniform system in their commercial regulations and *other important matters*

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might be necessary to the common interest and permanent harmony of the several states.”

The delegates decided that the representation was too small to warrant definite action and contented itself with calling of another conference to meet in Philadelphia on the second Monday in May 1787. Alexander Hamilton, a delegate from New York, using New Jersey's idea of extending conference matters beyond trade, drew up an address to the states, which was approved by those present, requesting that the conference consider questions not merely of trade but “devise such further provisions as should appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the federal government adequate to the exigencies of the Union.” Congress was indifferent to an appeal to sanction the conference officially. The states began to lose interest, but Shay's rebellion in Massachusetts for the avowed purpose of disrupting the government, awakened the country to the state of affairs.

In the midst of the excitement caused by this rebellion, Washington writes to Henry Lee, then in Congress:

“You talk, my good sir, of employing influence to appease the present tumult in Massachusetts. I know not where that influence is to be found, or, if attainable, that it would be a proper remedy for the disorders. *Influence is not government.* Let us have one by which our lives, liberties, and properties will be secured, or let us know the worst at once.”

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Public opinion thus aroused was favorable to the conference, which fact led Congress to approve it, the states to appoint delegates; and thus the historic Constitutional Convention was assembled.

Such a convention was undoubtedly in the mind of Washington when he invited the Maryland and Virginia commissioners to Mount Vernon two years before; for he had many times expressed himself in favor of centralized power in a federal government which could administer national affairs independently from the states, and he had a maturing conception of what the new nation ought to do.

## CHAPTER XI

### SERVICE IN THE MAKING AND ADOPTING OF THE CONSTITUTION

ON June 8, 1783, from headquarters of the army at Newburgh, Washington addressed a circular letter to the governors of all the states for the purpose of calling public attention to the need of a closer union and to instill an intelligent appreciation of the freedom won. In it he stated that the first pillar, "on which the glorious fabric of our independency and national character must be supported," is "an undissoluble union of the States under one federal head," and the second is "a sacred regard to public justice." After the war, when the country seemed to be rent asunder by internal jealousies and the conception of a strong national government was weak, he stated the situation as follows:

"Like a young heir come a little prematurely to a large inheritance, we shall wanton and run riot until we have brought our reputation to the brink of ruin, and then, like him, shall have to labor with the current of opinion, when compelled perhaps, to do what prudence and common

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policy pointed out, as plain as any problem in Euclid, in the first instance . . . I think we have opposed Great Britain and have arrived at the present state of peace, to very little purpose, if we cannot conquer our own prejudices."

Of the 500,000 men available for the field, probably less than half had taken any militant part in expelling the Britons. Now these stay-at-home or "chimney 'corner patriots," as Franklin called them, were the most savage opponents of the English, and from them came the biting critics of the movement toward a strong, centralized government, as embodied in the proposed constitution. They attacked Washington, impugning his motives. Franklin called them "malevolent critics and bug writers." Washington held himself above all personalities and political quarrels. He kept steadily on, urging coöperation in the Union, counseling governors and public men to lay aside feuds, jealousies, and greed. The conduct of the masses seemed to him to be selfish, violent, capricious, vindictive, and dangerous, yet he felt that they could be led by intelligent and honest leadership to approve a republican form of government by which these very things could be held in leash to their own well being. It is little wonder that he, in common with other thinking men of his day, lost confidence in the uncontrolled masses to stabilize government. Pure democracy could not govern America; representative government would furnish a deliberative body which could

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direct the masses into the right channels of development.

August 1, 1778, writing to John Jay, Washington remarks: "We have errors to correct. We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of a coercive power. . . . To be fearful of investing Congress, constituted as that body is, with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness."

November 5, 1786, in a letter to James Madison about the pending Constitutional Convention, Washington says: "Fain would I hope that the great and most important of all subjects, the federal government, may be considered with that calm and deliberate attention, which the magnitude of it so critically and loudly calls for at this critical moment. . . . Let us look to our national character, and to things beyond the present moment. No morn has ever dawned more favorably than ours did; and no day was ever more clouded than the present. Wisdom and good examples are necessary at this time to rescue the political machine from the impending storm."

In this same letter is a quotation from a message received from General Knox concerning the persons responsible for the disturbances so recurrent in Massachusetts: "Their creed is, that the property of the United States has been

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protected from the confiscation of Britain by the joint exertions of all; and therefore ought to be the common property of all; and he that attempts opposition to this creed is an enemy to equity and justice, and ought to be swept from the face of the earth. They are determined to annihilate all debts, public and private, and have agrarian laws, which are easily effected by the means of unfunded paper money, which shall be a tender in all cases whatever." Commenting upon this early communism, Washington writes Madison: "How melancholy is the reflection, that in so short a space we should have made such large strides towards fulfilling the predictions of our transatlantic foes; leave them to themselves, and their government will soon dissolve." To Knox: "Vigilance in watching and vigor in acting is become in my opinion indispensably necessary. If the powers are inadequate, amend or alter them; but do not let us sink into the lowest state of humiliation and contempt and become a byword in all the earth."

March 31, 1787, he expresses the hope that all delegates to the convention will come unfettered with instructions. "I am desirous of knowing how this matter is, as my wish is that the convention may adopt no temporizing expedients, but probe the defects of the constitution to the bottom, and provide a radical cure, whether they are agreed to or not. A conduct of this kind will stamp wisdom and dignity on their proceedings and hold up a light which sooner or later will have its influence."



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He followed out the same thought to James Doane in 1780: "There are two things, as I have often declared, which, in my opinion, are indispensably necessary to the well-doing and good government of our Public affairs. These are, greater power in congress, and more responsibility and permanency in the executive bodies." Both of these suggestions eventually were embodied in the instrument created by the Convention.

We are certain from notes left by Washington that before he went to the convention he had read Madison's notes on the strength and weakness of the Lycean, Amphictyonic, Archean, Helvetic, Belgic, and Germanic federations as disclosed by history. Study and thought had been given to the subjects which learned men were to discuss. A background of information had been laid for an independent judgment on whatever might be proposed.

That Washington should become the president of the convention was the natural result of his expressed convictions and the well recognized fact that he had been influential in bringing it about, also because no man stood as high in the confidence of the people. The fact that he was one of the largest property owners and probably the richest man in the country gave him a dominating influence. The very circumstance of his presiding over the Convention would commend it to the respectful attention of the states and Congress. His personality and masterful poise held the brilliant assemblage to its task. Only once did he speak,

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and that was in favor of reducing the basis of representation in the House of Representatives from 40,000 to 30,000 so that the will of the people might be more broadly expressed. It is reported that during the Convention debates, a member proposed a standing army, limited to five thousand. Washington replied that this would be satisfactory if no enemy should invade the United States with more than three thousand men.

It is fair to presume that he had many conferences in private with delegates over the plan for the constitution, and his judgment was potent in molding the machinery whereby the principles embodied in the instrument might be workable in administration. He was fundamentally interested in the business end of government and desired to fortify it against the weaknesses of human nature. This is illustrated in a letter to Thomas Jefferson in March, 1784, containing an argument against continual sessions of Congress:

“ . . . Annual sessions would always produce a full representation and alertness in business. The delegates, after a separation of eight or ten months, would meet each other with glad countenances. They would be complaisant; they would yield to each other all that duty to their constituents would allow; and they would have better opportunities of becoming acquainted with their sentiments, and removing improper prejudices, when they are imbibed, by mixing with

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them during recess. Men, who are always together, get tired of each other's company; they throw off all restraint, which is necessary to keep things in proper tune; they say and do things, which are personally disgusting; this begets opposition; opposition begets faction; and so it goes on, till business is impeded, often at a stand. I am sure (having the business prepared by proper boards or a committee) an annual session of two months would despatch more business than is done now in twelve."

Judging from his interest already disclosed and from what he afterwards did, it is reasonable to conclude that he aided the insertion of the clause in the constitution which clothed Congress with power "to promote the Progress of Science and Useful Arts, by securing for limited times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right in their respective Writings and Discoveries." In his first message to Congress when President, he directed attention to the fostering of new and useful inventions.

His diary kept during the Convention is silent as to the proceedings of this body, excepting references to his selection as chairman, the appointment of a committee on rules and regulations, an adjournment to give the committee time to formulate a report, and the reconvening and adoption of the committee's report. His diary entries are not statements of his opinions, nor are they expense accounts, but are, for the most part, records of persons he met, dined with

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or visited, and, as usual, observations on new methods of farming or stock raising encountered. For example, he records a visit which he paid to the farm of one Jones to see the effect of using plaster of Paris as a fertilizer: "This manure he put in on the 29th of October in a wet or moist spell, and whilst the Moon was in its increase, which Jones sayd (though there certainly can be nothing in it) he was directed to attend to (but this must be whimsical) and at the rate of about 5 bushels to the acre." He learned the best way, from talking with some farmers, to raise buckwheat and the proper manner of feeding it in a mixture with Irish potatoes to fatten hogs. An entry of August 19, 1787, is very near a dash of sentiment: "In company with Mr. Powell rode up to the white marsh, traversed my old Incampment and contemplated on the dangers which threatened the American Army at that place." It was here that the army began its march to winter quarters at Valley Forge at the close of the Brandywine-Germantown campaign.

A few days later he writes: "Visited a machine at Doctr. Franklin's (called mangle) for pressing, in place of ironing, clothes from the Wash—which machine from the facility with which it dispatches business is well calculated for Table Cloths & such articles as have not pleats & irregular foldings and would be very useful in all large families."

Concerning the final adjournment of the Convention, is this entry:

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"The business being thus closed, the members adjourned to the City Tavern, dined together, and took a cordial leave of each other; after which I returned to my lodgings, did some business with, and received the papers from the Secretary of the Convention, and *retired to meditate on the monumental work which had been executed.*"

The papers from the secretary to which he refers were the records of the Convention which were directed to be delivered to him to "retain the Journal and other papers subject to the order of Congress, if ever formed under the constitution."

Washington knew that the approval by the people of the instrument as drawn meant the birth of a nation; and he left Philadelphia determined to throw every ounce of his influence in its favor, despite the fact that he was not fully in accord with all of its provisions.

Hence he wrote to Edmund Randolph (January 8, 1788):

"There are some things in the new form, I will readily acknowledge, which never did, and I am persuaded never will, obtain my cordial approbation; but I then did conceive, and now most firmly believe, in the aggregate it is the best constitution, that can be obtained at this epoch, and that this, or a dissolution of the Union, awaits our choice, and are the only alternatives before us. Thus believing, I had not, nor have I now, any hesitation in deciding on which to lean."

## MAKING OF THE CONSTITUTION

Writing to Bushrod Washington, referring to the constitution as submitted and the objections raised to it, he emphasizes the fact that the door of amendment is always open:

"I do not think we are more inspired, have more wisdom, or possess more virtue, than those who will come after us. The power under the constitution will always be in the people. . . . No man is a warmer advocate for proper restraints and wholesome checks in every department of government, than I am; but I have never yet been able to discover the propriety of placing it absolutely out of the power of men to render essential service, because a possibility remains of their doing ill."

To Thomas Jefferson, August 31, 1788, he commented:

"I can say there are scarcely any of the amendments, which have been suggested, to which I have much objection, except that which goes to the prevention of direct taxation. And that, I presume, will be more strenuously advocated and insisted upon hereafter, than any other. . . . We may perhaps rejoice, that people have been ripened by misfortune for the reception of a good government. They are emerging from the gulf of dissipation and debt, into which they had precipitated themselves at the close of the war. Economy and industry are evidently gaining ground. Not only agriculture, but even manufacturers, are much

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more attended to than formerly. Notwithstanding the shackles under which our trade in general labors, commerce to the West Indies is prosecuted with considerable success. Salted provisions and other produce (particularly from Massachusetts) have found an advantageous market there. The voyages are so much shorter, and the vessels are navigated at so much less expense, that we may hope to rival and supply (at least through the West Indies) some part of Europe with commodities from thence. This year the exports from Massachusetts have amounted to a great deal more than their imports. I wish this was the case everywhere."

In 1786 great uneasiness was felt over the fact that the mouth of the Mississippi was in the control of a foreign power, and many were urging the securing of it by force. Washington demonstrated business sense by urging that:

"Whenever the new states become so populous and so extended to the westward, as really to need it, there will be no power which can deprive them of the use of the Mississippi. Why, then, should we prematurely urge a matter, which may produce disagreeable consequences, if it is our interest to let it sleep?"

Ten years later he secured from the Spanish Government, by treaty, complete trade privileges for Americans through New Orleans.

## MAKING OF THE CONSTITUTION

These excerpts give a good picture of Washington's mind when the next call came for service. He was satisfied that under the constitution a thorough-going business system could be devised which would be the foundation for the nation's greatness.



## CHAPTER XII

### A BUSINESS PRESIDENT

THE Constitution being adopted, the country turned to Washington to establish it and to put the new system into operation; for he was universally recognized as the greatest administrator of affairs in the States, and was in fact the greatest executive the New World had produced. His powerful influence had helped to create the new conditions out of the old, and he had more at stake than anyone else in property and fame. The Presidency was accepted, with hesitation, for he did not deem himself equal to the responsibilities involved, clearly seeing that the incumbent of that office must be more potent than any other agency of the government in awakening a national consciousness and in directing an intelligent acceptance of conditions which would work a radical change in modes of thought and conduct.

At this time he was short of cash, and before he should leave Virginia felt obligated to pay several small debts to tradesmen in Alexandria, and also needing money to pay the expenses of himself and family to New York, borrowed \$2500 from Captain Richard Conway. He declares in his diary that he never expected to be forced to borrow money

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on interest, but was driven to it because of "short crops and other causes not entirely within my control."

April 30, 1789, he took the oath of office as the first President of the United States, being then fifty-seven years old. The unusual firmness of his "So help me God," has been commented upon by contemporaries.

As could be readily predicted, the approach to the duties of the presidency was through a business sense, which nature and experience had sharpened and a mind had matured. The Constitution was the charter of a great corporation and the President was the business manager. This idea stood guard day and night. It became an obsession.

During the summer of 1789 Congress was engaged in framing the laws for the organization and operation of the departments with which to start the government. These departments, as well as others created during Washington's term, were in deference to his pronounced idea that individual responsibility was best. He wanted a man for a definite job upon whom the responsibility could be placed. The institution of the Cabinet, composed of such men, was the President's plan for general supervision and means of controlling a unity of action. The Confederation had tried the English system of commissions with disastrous results.

While Congress was thus busy, Washington spent his time studying the reports and proceedings of those boards and commissions which had tried to run the Confederation, seeking information which might aid in the formation of

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his policies. When Congress convened in September of that year, he was well informed concerning the past and had largely framed his future course of action.

Writing to Lafayette about this time he says hopefully: "My endeavors shall be unremittingly exerted even at the hazard of former fame, or present popularity, to extricate my country from the embarrassments in which it is entangled, through want of credit; and to establish a general system of policy, which, if pursued, will insure permanent felicity to the commonwealth. I think I see a path as clear and as direct as a ray of light, which leads to the attainment of that object."

The position of President necessarily impinged upon his personal freedom of action. On May 17, 1789, shortly after the inauguration, Washington sent a letter to the Vice-president and to Hamilton, asking their opinion on certain principles of official etiquette for his consideration, submitting among others relating to his social life such questions as: "Should the President be accessible to everyone; should a policy of total exclusion prevail or should a middle course be adopted? How often should public receptions be held and when should the President be free to all who have business with him? Might the President with propriety and without giving offense, entertain a small number of people at dinner? Might the President make informal and unofficial visits to his friends and might he not, in the interest of the Union visit the States in the recess of Congress?"

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Carefully weighing this advice and that of others consulted, he deliberately mapped out his deportment in the same spirit which actuated his compilation of maxims when a boy. His personal conduct, he concluded, must be such as to impress the public with the majesty and the integrity of a republican form of government. "Manners excited fully as much passion as legislation," he asserted; and so to manners was given first consideration. Within this term was included not only his personal bearing toward others, his wearing apparel and equipage for public appearance, but the social etiquette of the Presidential household and the procedure in all matters of business.

It was his conviction that dignity and power were attributes of a nation which must be exemplified by the occupant of its highest office. The influence of his own behavior would gain and maintain for the position a preëminent place in the estimation of the people. The decision was for "a just medium between too much state and too great familiarity" in dealing with both the officials and the citizens with whom he was to come in contact. If he could do right things in a right way, tongues would wag rightly, was his hope.

His nature was adaptable to decrees of his judgment. It is not difficult for a person of determination to follow a program which arises out of the soul in harmony with the purpose. Fortunately Washington had the faculty of making whatever he did impressive. This was due not only

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to his personality but to the meticulous attention given the details involved in every action. What was worth doing he felt should be worthily performed.

Covering his personal attitude with the cloak of impersonality, he concluded to make no calls upon individuals; to accept no invitations; and not to shake hands with people. Social functions were to be confined to official receptions, and a general "levee" would be given once a week by Mrs. Washington. His wearing apparel would be of a quiet elegance. This plan was adhered to during his term of office. Carrying himself thus, as the head of the greatest adventure of mankind, he hoped to draw the utmost respect and confidence, which would enable the government to create a favorable public opinion to sustain the administration.

An invitation to attend the funeral services of Mrs. Isaac Roosevelt, the wife of a prominent New York politician and State Senator, was politely declined, because he said: "First, the propriety of accepting any invitations of the sort appeared very questionable, and secondly, (although to do it in this instance might not be improper) because it might be difficult to discriminate in cases which might thereafter happen."

One Theophile Casenove, a Holland banker, desired to deliver to the President in person certain letters; but Washington refused to permit this because, if the letters referred to public matters, they must come to him through the Secretary of State, and if concerning private matters, the gen-

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tleman must be presented at one of the public "levees." "It being conceived that etiquette of the sort is essential with all foreigners to give a respect to the chief magistrate, and the dignity of the government, which would be lessened if every person who could procure a letter of introduction should be presented otherwise than at Levee hours in a formal manner." A biographer says of Washington's social relations: "He never claimed anything for himself save the respect due him as a man and a courteous man, though he exacted the last tribute of deference to any office he held,—but for the office's sake, not his own."

He frequently walked about the city, but preferred horse-back riding for exercise and pleasure and was often seen mounted on one of his beautiful saddle horses, of which he was very proud because they had been bred and raised at Mount Vernon under his direct supervision. In his stable at Philadelphia were ten fine bays and two white chargers, named Prescott and Jackson, which were the President's favorites. The grooming of these is interestingly related by his stepson: "The night before the horses were expected to be ridden they were covered entirely over with a paste, of which whiting was the principal component part; then the animals were swathed in body-cloths, and left to sleep upon clean straw. In the morning the composition had become hard, was well rubbed in, and curried and brushed, which process gave to the coats a beautiful glossy and satin-like appearance. The hoofs were blacked

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and polished, the mouths washed, teeth picked and cleaned, and, the leopard skin housings being properly adjusted, the white chargers were led out for service."

The President purchased from Clark, the famous carriage maker of Philadelphia, a coach called "the white chariot," which had a cream-colored body and wheels, green blinds, with the Washington coat-of-arms upon the doors. It was drawn by six horses. This equipage was censured by some as smacking too largely of royalty. In fact it was a symbol of authority deliberately planned to impress the multitude, who needed to be constantly reminded of the existence of a superior authority.

Living in the presidential home was simple, and economy was not forgotten despite the fact that the government was paying the bills. Oliver Wolcott of Connecticut, who was worried as to whether he would be able to live on his salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year as first Auditor of the Treasury, wrote his wife: "The example of the President and his family will render parade and expense improper and disreputable."

To prevent display and lavish living, Washington carefully inspected the weekly expense account. In Philadelphia, Sam Fraunces, at whose tavern in New York in 1783 the General had bade farewell to his officers, was the steward of the household. He was inclined to be extravagant, and many a scolding he received during these weekly examinations. His stepson tells this story of his disliked ostentation:

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"It happened that a single shad was caught in the Delaware in February, and brought to the Philadelphia market for sale. Fraunces pounced upon it with the speed of an osprey, regardless of price, charmed that he had secured a delicacy that, above all others, he knew would be agreeable to the palate of his chief.

"When the fish was served, Washington suspected a departure from his orders touching the provisions to be made for his table, and said to Fraunces, who stood at his post at the sideboard, 'What fish is this?' 'A shad, a very fine shad,' was the reply. 'I knew your Excellency was particularly fond of this kind of fish, and was so fortunate as to procure this one in market—a solitary one, and the first of the season—' 'The price, sir; the price,' continued Washington, in a stern commanding tone: 'The price, sir?' 'Three—three—three dollars,' stammered out the conscience-stricken steward. 'Take it away,' thundered the chief, 'take it away, sir; it shall never be said that my table sets such an example of luxury and extravagance.'"

The dinners to which people of distinction or of high official rank were invited were free from all ostentation but carefully planned and complete in appointments. Loving social life as his Mount Vernon days demonstrate, he yet felt as President that it must be controlled and limited to such events as might be used to illustrate the worth of the nation apart from any individual indulgence. His whole life as President was molded to this end. Hence he wrote:



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"In a word, if a man cannot act in all respects as he would wish, he must do what appears best, under the circumstances he is in. This I aim at, however short I may fall of the end." Many times expediency dictated his policy, as: "I have found it of importance and highly expedient to yield to many points in fact, without seeming to have done it, and thus to avoid bringing in a too frequent discussion of matters which in a political view ought to be kept a little behind the curtain, and not to be made too much the subject of disquisition. Time only can eradicate and overcome customs and prejudices of long standing—they must be got the better of by slow and gradual advances."

One motto he religiously followed: "I never say anything of a man that I have the smallest scruple of saying to him."

Punctuality was a hobby. At the time set for dinner, he entered the dining room. Great was the embarrassment for the late comers. Mr. Wignell requested the President to attend a play at his theater. The President asked the time for raising the curtain.

"Seven o'clock is the hour, but of course, the curtain will not rise till your Excellency's arrival."

The President replied:

"I will be punctual, sir, to the time; nobody waits a single moment for me."

John Adams tells us that "General Washington, one of the most attentive men in the world to the manner of doing

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things, owed a great proportion of his celebrity to this circumstance."

Although seeking counsel of all, his final authority within his constitutional limit was impressed upon everyone. Adams said of him, "No man, I believe, has influence with the President. He seeks information from all quarters, and judges more independently than any man I ever knew."

In a letter of October, 1791, he requests Lear, his private secretary, to "examine my speeches at the opening of the last three sessions of Congress and compare the several matters recommended in them with the Laws that have passed, noting the things recommended and not acted upon at all—as also the measures recommended and taken up by Congress but not finished; such as the Militia Law &ca., that I may, by seeing the state of the business, decide upon the propriety (as I am about to meet a new House of Representatives) of bringing the same matters before Congress again."

There has never been a greater conscious and determined use of one's personality and motivation of conduct to further a great undertaking in the interest of the common welfare of mankind, than was made by George Washington while President. His natural bent, it is true, made this possible and easy for him to accomplish. Yet it all demonstrates what will and sound judgment can do in making a life useful through behavior. Theodore Roosevelt once said to Dr. John Richards, who was prescribing rather dras-

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tic rules for him during his last illness: "Do what you deem best. I want you to know that I have no habits I cannot correct, and no ideas I cannot control." It was the same with the first President, who corrected his habits and controlled his ideas all to conform to his plan of conduct while in office.

Washington is charged with being cold and reserved. Jefferson once said: "He never promises anything." Elkanah Watson, however, after visiting at Mount Vernon, testifies: "The cautious reserve, which wisdom and policy dictated whilst engaged in rearing the glorious fabric of our independence, was evidently the result of consummate prudence, and not characteristic of his nature."

## CHAPTER XIII

### CINCINNATUS

FOR seven years previous to assuming the presidency, Washington had been working industriously to make his private estates produce an adequate income, and had, to a large degree, succeeded, but was still dependent upon the sales of his lands for added revenue; nevertheless, he at first refused a salary as president, stipulating only for his expenses. Congress wisely voted \$25,000 a year, which was not more than enough to meet the scale of expenditure expected from the head of the national government.

Elaborate plans were formed for carrying on his farming operations while absent; detailed instructions were written the overseers about the time and method of planting various crops, kinds of seed to be used, manner of fertilizing of the different soils, the cultivation and marketing of the produce, and the care of the horses, mules, and cattle.

In the "Recollections of Washington" by George Washington Parke Custis appear the agricultural directions which Washington gave—on March 1, 1789, a fortnight before leaving Mount Vernon for New York to assume the Presidency—to his nephew, George A. Washington, to whom he left the superintending of the farms. They disclose the

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meticulous care with which this business man conducted his affairs, and reveal the person in a very intimate way. The document is strikingly human and informative, but only parts can here be quoted:

“Having given very full and ample details of the intended crops, and my ideas of the modes of managing them at the several plantations, little, if these are observed, needs be added on this subject. But, as the profit of every farm is greater or less, in proportion to the quantity of manure which is made thereon, or can be obtained by keeping the fields in good condition, these two important requisites ought never to be lost sight of. . . .

“To effect the former, besides the ordinary means of farmyards, cow-pens, sheep-folds, stables, &c., it would be of essential use, if a certain proportion of the force of each plantation could be appropriated, in the summer or early part of autumn, to the purpose of getting up mud to be ameliorated by the frosts of winter for the spring crops, which are to follow. And, to accomplish the latter, the gullies in these fields, previous to their being sown with grain and grain-seeds, ought invariably to be filled up. By so doing, and a small sprinkling of manure there, they will acquire a green sward and strength of soil sufficient to preserve them. These are the only means I know of by which exhausted lands can be recovered and an estate rescued from destruction. . . .

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“Although a precise number of tobacco hills is, by my general directions, allotted to each plantation, yet my real intention is, that no more ground shall be appropriated to this crop than what is either naturally *very* good (for which purpose small spots may be chosen), or what can be made strong by manure of some kind or other; for my object is to labor for profit, and therefore to regard quality instead of quantity, there being, except in the article of manuring, no difference between attending a good plant and an indifferent one. But, in any event, let the precise number of hills be ascertained, that an estimate may be formed of their yield to the thousand. . . .

“Being thoroughly convinced, from experience, that embezzlement and waste of crops (to say nothing of the various accidents to which they are liable by delays) are increased proportionably to the time they are suffered to remain on hand, my wish is, as soon as circumstances will permit after the grain is harvested, that it may be got out of the straw, especially at the plantations where there are no barns, and either disposed of in proper deposits, or sold, if it is wheat, and the price is tolerable, after it has been converted into flour. When this work is set about as the sole or as a serious business, it will be executed properly; but when a little is done now and a little then, there is more waste, even if there should be no embezzlement, than can well be conceived. . . .

“Such moneys as you may receive for flour, barley, fish,

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as also for other things, which can be spared and sold; and for rents, the use of the jacks, &c.; and for book debts, which may be tried, though little is expected from the justice of those who have been long indulged; may be applied to the payment of workmen's wages as they arise, Fairfax, and the taxes, and likewise to the payment of any just debts which I may be owing in small sums, and have not been able to discharge previous to my leaving the state. The residue may await further orders. . . .

"As I shall want shingles, plank, nails, rum for harvest, scantling, and such like things, which would cost me money at another time, fish may be bartered for them. The scantling, if any is taken, must be such as will suit for the barn now about to be built, or that at Dogue Run, without waste and of good quality. . . .

"I find it is indispensably necessary, for two reasons, to save my own clover and timothy-seed; first, because it is the only certain means of having it good and in due season; and, secondly, because I find it is a heavy article to purchase. . . .

"Save all the honey-locusts you can of those which belong to me; if more could be obtained, the better; and, in the fall, plant them on the ditches where they are to remain about six inches apart, one seed from another. . . .

"The seeds, which are on the case in my study, ought, without loss of time, to be sown and planted in my botan-

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ical garden, and proper memoranda kept of the times and places. . . .

“You will use your best endeavors to obtain the means for support of G. and L. Washington, who, I expect, will board, till something further can be decided on, with Dr. Craik, who must be requested to see that they are decently and properly provided with clothes from Mr. Porter’s store. He will give them a credit on my becoming answerable to him for the payment; and, as I know of no resource that H. has for supplies but from me, Fanny will, from time to time, as occasion may require, have such things got for her, on my account, as she shall judge necessary. Mrs. Washington will, I expect, leave her tolerably well provided with common articles for the present. . . .

“My memorandum books, which will be left in my study, will inform you of the times and places, when and where, different kinds of wheat, grass-seeds, &c., were sown. Let particular attention be paid to the quality and quantity of each sort that a proper judgment of them may be formed. To do this, great care must be taken to prevent mixture of the several sorts, as they are so contiguous to each other. . . .

“The general superintendence of my affairs is all I require of you; for it is neither my desire nor wish that you should become a drudge to it, or that you should refrain from any amusements or visitings which may be agreeable either to Fanny or yourself to make or receive. If Fairfax, the farmer, and Thomas Green, on each of them I have en-



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deavored to impress a proper sense of their duty, will act their part with propriety and fidelity, nothing more will be necessary for you to do than would comport with amusement and that exercise which is conducive to health. Nor is it my wish that you should live in too parsimonious a manner. Frugality and economy are undoubtedly commendable, and all that is required. Happily for this country, these virtues prevail more and more every day among all classes of citizens. I have heard of, and I have seen with pleasure, a remarkable change in the mode of living from what it was a year or two ago; and nothing but the event, which I dreaded would take place soon, has prevented my following the example. Indeed, necessity, if this had not happened, would have forced me into the measure, as my means are not adequate to the expense at which I have lived since my retirement to what is called private life. Sincerely wishing you health and happiness, I am ever your warm friend and affectionate uncle."

Then follows "A View of the Work at the several plantations at Mount Vernon, in the year 1789, and General Directions for the execution of it," from which the following quotation in reference to Muddy Hole Farm will serve to illustrate his detailed directions:

"Pumpkins, potatoes, turnips, and buckwheat for a crop in the order they are mentioned, will next claim the assistance of the ploughs. The first should be planted in May,

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in hills eight feet apart and well manured; the second in June, in drills four feet apart and a foot asunder in the rows, with a large handful of manure on each potato, which should be uncut and of the largest sort; the third—that is, turnips—to be sown partly in June and partly in July; and the fourth, buckwheat, as near as may be to the 10th of July. . . .

“This field of sundries may be thus apportioned: Carrots, five acres; potatoes, five; pumpkins, one; turnips, one; pease, fifteen; flax, three; tobacco, five; buckwheat, thirty-five; being seventy in all. . . .

“That it may be ascertained, by repeated experiments, whether carrots or potatoes are the most productive and valuable root, I would have the ten acres allotted for them in one square, and the rows for each alternate through the whole square, and each to have the same quantity of manure allowed to it.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### PATER FAMILIAS

WASHINGTON was one of those Southern planters who believed it to be consistent with his dignity to manage his own private affairs. He found great pleasure in this and refused to surrender the prerogative when he became President. What he did in respect of such matters brings the man very close to us. There is a wealth of information about Washington's manner of conducting his domestic and private business affairs while President, as well as some public duties, in the letters written by him between 1790 and 1799 to Tobias Lear, who was during the last sixteen years of Washington's life his private secretary. These were published in 1907 under the title "Letters and Recollections of George Washington." Lear's relation to the Mount Vernon household before the period of this correspondence is very clearly set forth in a letter Washington wrote to a friend: "Mr. Lear, or any other man who may come into my family in the blended character of preceptor to the children and as a clerk or private secretary to me, will sit at my table, will live as I live, will mix with the company who resort to the house, will be treated in every respect with civility and proper attention."

## PATER FAMILIAS

Frequently Lear was at Mount Vernon or other places on business for the President, and these letters were instructions about many things. They exhibit a marvelous faculty for details and furnish indisputable evidence of a man of business who could successfully direct many diverse interests.

When the Presidential residence was ordered moved from New York to Philadelphia, where the seat of government was to be located for ten years, until the President should select the permanent site as directed by Congress upon the "Potomac River, between the eastern branch and Conogogue," Lear was directed to arrange for renting the Robert Morris home, which had been offered and accepted, although the amount of the rental had not been determined. The proffer of the Philadelphia Council to provide a residence had been courteously refused. Washington was rather disturbed over the delay in fixing the rent and writes Lear:

"I do not know nor do I believe that anything unfair is intended by either Mr. Morris or the committee; but let us for a moment suppose that the rooms (the new ones, I mean) were to be hung with tapestry, or a very rich and costly paper, neither of which would suit my furniture; that costly ornaments for the bow windows, extravagant chimney-pieces and the like were to be provided; that workmen, from extravagance of the times, for every twenty shillings' worth of work would charge forty shillings; and that

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advantage would be taken of the occasion to newly paint every part of the house and buildings; would there be any propriety in adding ten or twelve-and-a-half per cent for all this to the rent of the house in its original state, for the two years that I am to hold it? If the solution of these questions is in the negative, wherein lies the difficulty of determining that the houses and lots, when finished according to the proposed plan, ought to rent for so much?"

The rent was finally fixed at \$3,000 per year.

Alterations had to be made; painting done inside and outside; furniture brought from Mount Vernon, as well as servants, horses and equipment. Washington writes detailed information and instructions to Lear about these. The use of each room is specified, with the furniture adapted to the purpose; particular directions given about shades and curtains and their color, the arrangement of mirrors and chinaware. He is very solicitous about the horses, harness and carriages. The names of the servants to be brought, and their duties are set forth:

"In my last I left it with you to decide on the propriety of bringing the washerwoman. I do so still. But with respect to Mrs. Lewis and her daughter, I wish it may not be done, especially as it is in contemplation to transplant Hercules or Nathan from the kitchen at Mount Vernon to that in Philadelphia; and because the dirty figures of Mrs. Lewis and her daughter will not be a pleasant sight in view

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(as the kitchen always will be) of the principal entertaining rooms in our new habitation."

Through Gouverneur Morris, in Paris, some wine coolers had been purchased; but the President writes to Lear: "As these coolers are designed for warm weather, and will be, I presume, useless in cold, or in that in which the liquors do not require cooling, quere, would not a stand like that for castors, with four apertures for so many different kinds of liquors, each aperture just sufficient to hold one of the cut decanters sent by Mr. Morris, be more convenient for passing the bottles from one to another, than the handling of each bottle separately, by which it often happens that one bottle moves, another stops and all are in confusion? Two of them—one for each end of the table, with a flat bottom, with or without feet, open at the sides, but with a raised rim, as casterstands have, and an upright, by way of handle, in the middle—could not cost a great deal, even if made wholly of silver. Talk to a silversmith and ascertain the cost."

Lear had them made and they proved to be so usable that for twenty-five years afterwards they might be seen upon the table of every fashionable family in Philadelphia. Washington was never credited with the invention, however.

Lear is informed that the servants must not get the idea that they can live as expensively as the family, but they are to have plenty of good food without wines. He fears

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Mr. Hyde as chef will be too expensive and directs that he be not brought if Lear finds he "has it in contemplation to talk in a short time (which is but too common a case) of increased wages."

Washington relieved his mind (September, 1790) thus: "The motive for writing you at this time is, that upon unpacking the china ornaments which accompanied the mirrors for the Tables, it was found (notwithstanding they were in Bran) that many of the delicate and tender parts were broken; occasioned, I believed, by the Bran not being put in and settled down by a little at a time. To press the Bran around the Images (you have to remove with the platteaux) will not answer; still it must be so compact as to prevent friction, in moving; and this can only be done by putting each image or figure in a separate box, with Bran, by little and little, shaking and settling it by degrees as it is needed."

In the midst of all his cares, he was thinking of his niece and nephews. October 10, 1790, he writes to Lear on what is an anxious problem to many a present-day parent: "The easy and quiet temper of Fanny is little fitted I find for the care of my niece Harriett Washington who is grown almost, if not quite a woman, & what to do with her at the advanced size she is arrived at, I am really at a loss. Her age (just turned of 14) is not too great for a boarding school, but to enter now with any tolerable pros-

## PATER FAMILIAS

pect, the Mistress of it must not only be respectable, but one who establishes and will enforce good rules. She is prone to idleness, and having been under no control, would create all the difficulty. I have found no resolution respecting what will be proper for me to do with her, but that I may the better judge, I request that you will enquire whether there be a proper School (for her to board at) in Philadelphia. If so, whether there are at it genteel girls of her size & age—who the mistress of it is—what her character—terms &c. are—the members of it—who of the principal families, and how they are entertained and accommodated? I have not intimated anything of this matter to Harriett yet, who if it should be, would I dare say be a good deal alarmed, as she had I dare say rather mix with other company than be in a boarding school. Among other things enquire what is taught at their schools. I must further desire, that in pursuing your enquiries after a school for Washington, particularly if one is to be found in the College at Philadelphia, fit for him, that you would extend them to the reputation of the higher branches in that Seminary, & whether much good could be expected from my fixing my nephews George and Lawrence in it. From what I can find, they are doing but little in Alexandria, having left the study of the languages, and indeed Mr. McWhir, & are learning French and the mathematics under a Mr. Harron. George & indeed Lawrence, I am told, are well disposed youths—neither of them wanting in capacity; and



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both, especially the first, very desirous of improvement. I would wish to know what their studies and board would stand them annually—in a word, the best estimate (exclusive of clothes) of the expense of fixing them at that place.”

Later on, the question of credit purchases was raised. “As we shall have new connections to form with different Tradesmen, find out those in each branch who stand highest for skill and fair dealing. ’Tis better to be slow in chusing than to be under the necessity of changing—and that it may be done upon sure grounds, compare one acct. with another (for particulars, perhaps less laudable motives, mix very much in all these things) and see where the preponderancy is. . . . Furnish Mrs. Washington with what money she may want—and from time to time—ask her if she does want, as she is not fond of applying.”

Washington’s effort to purchase a supply of blankets is a good example of his business thrift. June 19, 1791, he writes: “As I shall have occasion for a number of Blankets for my people this fall; and as the best time to purchase them I am told is after the Winter’s demand is over, I should be glad if you would make a pretty diligent enquiry after them, before I arrive; that I may know whether and upon what terms I can get supplies. It is probable I may want near two hundred.”

September 26, 1791: “If you have not already made a purchase of Blankets, I wish you to suspend doing it until

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you hear from me again. I am about to send this day to Alexandria, where it is said large importations of this article have been made,—to learn the qualities and price of the dutch Blanketing. Sitgreaves' Memo. is not explicit enough to enable me to judge of the size or quality of his—the only sort of them which are applicable to my use, are inserted thus,—'Striped Duffells 115/. to 180/. Pr. Piece of 15 Blankets.'—This brings the lowest of these to 9/. & the highest to 12/. each—which is high, supposing them of the largest size, & of the first quality. If you will mention in your next the length and breadth of the different sizes and whether they are of the best quality, I shall be better able to decide."

October 2, 1791: "I am not yet able to speak decisively with respect to the Blankets. Many have arrived, but not yet opened in Alexandria. Mr. Wilson who has imported of them largely, at from 56/. to 75/. sterlg. Pr. Piece of 15 Blankets has offered them to me at 70 P. Ct. but as he cannot before they are opened, give the size, or quality, it is impossible to say whether they will come cheap or dear. I shall ascertain this matter before Friday next, and will then write you on the subject again."

October 7, 1791: "Messrs. Sitgreaves' give no length to their Blankets and if Col. Biddle has been accurate in his accounts, & I understand him, the Blankets he has had offered to him, however good in other respects, are intolerably narrow. Under this view of the matter I am perplexed.

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I by no means like the prices or quality of those Blankets in Alexandria, and scarcely know what judgment to form of those in Philadelphia, but if whilst hesitating between the two I should miss both, it would be bad indeed, as my people would in that case be in great distress the ensuing winter. Upon the whole I have resolved to refer the matter once more to you with the Alexandria prices & sizes (the quality you can only form an opinion of from the description I have already given) of the Blankets in that place, and to request that you and Colo Biddle will endeavor to procure me the quantity wanting—viz.—200; if upon comparison you shall conceive I may be benefitted thereby. One hundred of the largest size & best quality is required;—the other hundred may be of middle size but good in quality. But in truth if I am to form an opinion of the sizes by the accts. sent, the largest of them scarcely comes up to my ideas of a middle sized Blanket. At all events let me know by the Wednesday's Post after you receive this (and which will reach me only the day before I leave home) what I have to trust to, as I should regret a disappointment exceedingly."

He closes with, "Mrs. Washington requests you to get her six pieces of Gingham according to the enclosed Memam. and to send them along with the Blankets."

April 5, 1793, from Mount Vernon: "Let me know in your next after the rect. of this what are the real selling prices of flour in Philadelphia and the opinion of the knowing

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ones whether the probability is that it will rise—fall—or remain where it is for any time. In this State it has fallen, but the scarcity of cash; & war, or the probability of one between France and G. Britain are assigned as the causes, together with the want of Vessels to export the produce of the Country.”

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PUBLIC BUSINESS

**R**ETURNING now to matters connected more directly with official life, we find one of the first orders the President issued to government officials, which has always been a motto of successful business, was also an expression of the rule of action by which he had performed prodigious labors: "Let me impress the following maxim upon the executive officers. In all important matters, deliberate maturely, but execute promptly and vigorously and do not put things off until tomorrow; which can be done and require to be done today. Without an adherence to these rules, business will never be done, or done in an easy manner, but will always be in arrears, with one thing treading upon the heels of another."

The President determined to have around him young men who were thoroughly nationalistic and who from experience, ability, and conviction were fitted to help organize and carry out a national system of government. He was not of that type of man who bears, like the Turk, "no brother near the throne" nor of the temper of George III who chose his ministers for their vacuous complacency. Alexander Hamilton, thirty years of age, whom the Presi-

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dent had known intimately for twelve years, was selected for Secretary of the Treasury. When a young man, he became a military secretary to Washington. He had a brilliant war record, and his arguments on behalf of the constitution had convinced Washington of his marvelous ability. Henry Knox, a tested officer of the Revolution, thirty-one years old, was made Secretary of War; Edmund Randolph, thirty-six, a brilliant member of a family of lawyers, was appointed Attorney General; and Thomas Jefferson, forty-six, largely because of his experience abroad was selected as Secretary of State. The practice of holding cabinet conferences was established, where frank discussion of problems prevailed.

In the appointment of the members of the Supreme Court the President made them representatives of all sections of the country, ascertaining in advance what each thought in general terms of the new government and desired its future to be. This was done not for the purpose of narrowing their minds upon any preconceived theory of law, but to be sure that in whatever decisions they should render, this government of a new and independent nation under its constitution should ever be uppermost in their thinking.

Concerning the judicial department, he wrote:

"Considering the judicial system as the chief pillar upon which our National Government must rest, I have thought it my duty to nominate for the high offices in that depart-

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ment such men as I have conceived would give dignity and luster to our national character.”

The business in hand was to maintain and strengthen a new nation with the aid of nation-builders of vision and courage. The war experience, coupled with a knowledge of the everyday man, since that time, had convinced Washington that the average citizen was not thinking nationally—that he had no conception of what was really taking place in the formation of a republic but was still immersed in local self-government. The education of the average citizen was a job to be performed by wise and efficient service from men who, like himself, were ready to set an example and live and act for the common good.

Just as he had seen that “interest” was what would hold together the eastern and western parts of the country, when he formed the Potomac Company, he now saw as President that, in order to draw to the government popular support and international respect, it was necessary to give to the government at the outset, a place of command in the business and material interests of the country.

Accordingly, finance was the first great subject to be brought to the attention of Congress, and to this task Washington set Hamilton, following him closely, backing him completely. The business men of the country suddenly awakened to the fact that there was a power over them to which allegiance was necessary.

When Congress assembled in January 1790, Hamilton,

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with Washington's approval, at once laid before it his "plan for the settlement of the public debt," providing that the foreign debt should be paid in full; that the disgraceful obligations of the wabbling and inefficient confederacy which left a currency so depreciated and uncertain that the country was near bankruptcy, should be refunded; and that the debts of the several states resulting from prosecution of the war for independence, should be decreed the obligation of the United States and be paid by it, thus relieving the states from their several heavy burdens.

These measures were necessary to clear the impending clouds from the new nation's horizon. It would put new life into trade and establish credit abroad as well as at home. There was \$50,000,000 of outstanding Confederation debts, \$20,000,000 of continental paper currency afloat, all of which were uncertain and declining in value. That these must be refunded and exchanged for bonds or currency backed by a stable government, was Washington's conviction.

Hamilton's plans were finally accepted by Congress, after a severe struggle over the assumption of the debt of the states. Then followed the creation of the national bank to standardize currency, stabilize prices and restore active business. Washington was quite familiar with the banking business. Ever since 1758 he had been the trustee of stock in the Bank of England and knew the place of that institution in the English governmental system. He remembered, no doubt, that for thirty-five years on Lady-



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day and Michaelmas, the dividends had regularly been paid. Several years previously he had asked Wakelin Welch: "if Great Britain was not enabled by means of the bank to carry on the war with this country?" He had been dealing since the Revolution with private banks, especially since he began selling his real estate, and was thoroughly acquainted with their operations. It was his judgment that a national bank was necessary to the stability of currency and the control of the finances of the Republic because state banks were naturally local in their interest and could not be amalgamated into a national system. He had urged Robert Morris to accept the office of Secretary of the Treasury because of his banking knowledge and experience, but Morris declined on account of his age and ill health, recommending Hamilton, who had been his apt pupil.

Madison, Jefferson, Randolph, and Monroe, were opposed to a national bank, fearing the control of the money powers of Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Boston. They declared in their written opinions, requested by the President, that the establishment of a national bank would be unconstitutional and most undesirable. Hamilton submitted his one-hundred-page opinion in favor of the act, expounding the doctrine of implied and inherent powers under the Constitution. None of the opponents of the act had had any banking experience and some not even a bank account. Washington needed only to be convinced of the constitutionality of the act, for of its practical need

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and use he felt certain. Relying upon Hamilton as a lawyer, he signed the bill; but in doing so laid the dividing line for two political parties, which he so much regretted afterwards. Had this bank not been established the new government would have been as helpless as the states in dealing with its finances.

Next Washington proceeded to put the taxing power into operation in order to raise revenue. This brought home to every citizen in a forceful way the fact of government. The "Whiskey Rebellion" in Pennsylvania, when the distillers refused to pay the tax imposed upon them, enabled the President to give a striking demonstration of the power and purpose of the new order. Amid the clamour of the friends of France in 1793, he calmly held his course, using the opportunity to demonstrate to Europe that a new star was in its ascendancy in the firmament of nations. "I want," he declared, "an American character, that the powers of Europe may be convinced we act for ourselves and not for others."

It was in such a spirit and consistent with his constant efforts to translate business and political theories into a practical working scheme of government, that he recommended in his first annual address to Congress legislation upon the following matters:

- "1. Provision for common defense.
2. Protection of those parts of the Union subject to attack from Indians.

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3. Provision for carrying into effect diplomatic relations with foreign countries.
4. Enactment of suitable naturalization laws.
5. Protection and encouragement of useful inventions.
6. Provisions for uniformity in currencies, weights and measures.
7. Provisions for the advancement of agriculture, commerce and manufacturing.
8. Provisions for the advancement of science, literature and 'aids to seminaries of learning already established . . . or by any other expedient.' "

The details of practical operation of the business of the government did not escape the Executive's attention. After observing the activities of the various departments placed around the Congressional assembly hall, an order was issued transferring them all to a building located some distance from the legislative body, because, as Washington avers: "It was the universal complaint of them all, that while the Legislature was in session, they could do little or no business; so much were they interrupted by the individual visits of members (in office hours) and by call for papers. Many of them have declared to me, that they have been obliged to go home and deny themselves in order to transact the current business."

In October, 1789, he conceived the idea of making a tour, during the recess of Congress, through the eastern states,

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“to acquire knowledge of the face of the country, the growth and agriculture thereof—and the temper and disposition of the inhabitants toward the new government.” Hamilton and Jay heartily approved; Jay advising, however, that if he did so, a similar trip would be demanded through the South. Accordingly between October 15th and November 7th he traveled over Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, everywhere being received with gratifying acclaim, which he interpreted as an approval of the government, and which gave him much pleasure. Only a man of business could write the diary he kept of this journey. It records observations on the farms, houses and crops, roads and bridges, with remarks now and then on the beauty of the landscape. His especial interest centered in the factories and industrial plants, many of which were visited. Regarding the cotton duck cloth manufacturing in Boston, he says, “This is a work of public utility and private advantage.” The “card manufactory” employing 900 hands “have made 63,000 pr. of cards in a year, and can undersell the imported cards.” At Lynn he found 175,000 pairs of shoes being made in a year by 400 workmen. He minutely describes the “inverted carding and spinning machines” at the “cotton manufactory” of John and Cabot Lodge near Beverly. Ipswich’s shipbuilding, the silk making in Mansfield, and the woolen mills at Hartford were inspected. He writes of a Hartford woolen mill: “Their broadcloths are not the first quality as yet, but they

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are good, as are their coatings, cassemères, serges and everlastings. Of the first, that is broadcloth, I ordered a suit to be sent me at New York, and of the latter, a whole piece to make breeches for my servants." Later he noted in his diary that at one of Mrs. Washington's receptions: "I was dressed in a suit of clothes made at the Woolen Manufactory at Hartford, as the buttons also were."

The diary contains an observation, at Portsmouth, N. H., that the houses were "indifferent and almost entirely of wood," which fact in a country abounding in stone and clay for bricks caused him to ask the reason: "I was told that on acct. of the fogs and damps they deemed them wholesomer." At Haverhill, he saw a "Duck Manufactory": "At this Manufactory one small person turns a wheel which employs eight spinners, each acting independently of each other, so as to occasion no interruptions to the rest if any of them is stopped—whereas at the Boston manufactory of this article, each spinner has a small girl to turn the wheel." At Boston, continues Washington, Dr. Samuel Haven "presented me with an Ear and part of the stock of the dyeing corn, and several pieces of cloth which had been dyed with it, equal to any colours I had ever seen, of various colours. This corn was blood red, and the rind of the stalk deeply tinged of the same colour."

The reception in Boston was very agreeable to him; he refers to there being in the parade forty-six trades, each carrying a white flag on which the particular trade was em-

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blazoned. At a reception in Portsmouth there were present many handsome ladies, "among whom (as was also the case at Salem and Boston Assemblies) were a greater proportion with much blacker hair than are usually seen in the Southern States."

Governor Hancock of Massachusetts did not personally greet him upon his entrance into the state but sent an invitation to dine, which Washington declined unless the Governor should first call upon him. The Governor's Secretary informed the President that Hancock was "too much indisposed to do it"; other emissaries came, clearly indicating the Governor's idea to be that within the state he was the superior of the President, but Washington was determined to demonstrate that the United States was greater than any single state. "I informed them in explicit terms that I should not see the Gov'r. unless it was at my own lodgings." Thereupon servants carried the gouty Governor, bound in bandages, into Washington's presence, with the explanation that he was not well enough to call upon him before. The next day Washington notes, "in the evening drank tea with Gov'r Hancock." It being "disagreeable" to the people of New Hampshire to travel on Sunday, he refrained, and on Sunday, November 8th, he "attended morning and evening services and heard very lame discourses from a Mr. Pond."

After his eastern journey, and following the advice of Jay, Washington made in 1791 a tour of the southern

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states. He enters in his diary much satisfaction in finding all opposition to the new system of government fast subsidizing and was gratified that the banking and tax laws were being accepted as their application was better understood: "I cannot discover that any discontentment prevails among the people at large, at the proceedings of Congress." Also he observed the rivers and comments on the possibilities of their being united into transportation courses.

"Was visited about 2'clock by a great number of the most respectable ladies of Charleston—the first honor of the kind I had ever experienced and it was as flattering as it was singular."

He also attended a concert one evening where "were at least 400 ladies the number and appearance of wch. exceeded anything of the kind I had ever seen." At Salem, N. C., he was interested in the Moravian settlement. He writes: "Spent the forenoon in visiting the shops of the different Tradesmen, the houses of accommodation for the single men and Sisters of the Fraternity, and their place of worship. Invited six of their principal people to dine with me, and in the evening went to hear them sing and perform on a variety of instruments church music." He also deems worthy of notice his visit to an "Orphan House" at Charleston, where were 107 boys and girls.

On his return he stopped at Mount Vernon for a few days and then continued on across Pennsylvania to Philadelphia. The dwelling houses built of stone, the barns and meadows,

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the forests, soil culture, and the general prosperity of that state make up the diary entries. These journeys not only gave him first-hand knowledge of the condition of the country and the people but furnished a medium through which he could carry an assurance of the reality of the government by his presence and inspire confidence, while also being able to explain publicly the purpose of the tax and banking laws enacted by Congress, concerning which there appeared to be considerable misunderstanding.

Franklin's son-in-law Bache criticized these "stately journeyings through the American continent in search of personal incense." Washington knew the psychology of the crowd. He was aware that the average citizen saw him as the government just as the English viewed the King in British affairs. He well knew the educational and patriotic value of such visitations, not only to the people of the new government but to the President in giving him first-hand information of the conditions of the country with which a president had to deal and a congress consider in legislation. After these tours, he recorded his conviction that:

"The establishment of public credit is an immense point gained in our national concerns. This I believe exceeds the expectations of the most sanguine among us, and a late instance, unparalleled in this country, has been given of the confidence reposed in our measures, by the rapidity with which the subscriptions to the Bank of the United States



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were filled. In two hours after the books were opened by the commissioners, the whole number of shares were taken up and four thousand more applied for than were allowed by the institution. This circumstance was not only pleasing as it related to the confidence in the government, but also it exhibited an unexpected proof of the resources of our citizens."

The United States Bank was capitalized at \$10,000,000, two million of which had been taken by the government and the remaining eight million by private investors. The proper method of handling the unsettled public lands had been under discussion for several years before Washington became President. This immense domain occupied a strategic place in the new government because the revenue derived from selling it must be depended upon for funds to pay the public debt and largely finance the administration. Washington's thorough knowledge of the western country enabled him to appraise any plan for its disposition. Two systems for regulating the disposal of public lands prevailed among the states. That of New England was a plan of "township planting." An area was designated for settlement. It was then officially surveyed, and platted before anyone could obtain title. Entries were then made by a group of settlers. In the South, where large-scale agriculture was prevalent, warrants were issued to an applicant who selected his land wherever he desired, in any un-

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appropriated area. Under this plan no previous surveys were made, and many disputes arose between locators, and monopolies of choice sections were made easy. Debate in Congress arose over which plan to adopt for the government. In 1784, Washington wrote to Richard Henry Lee, then President of Congress, advocating a general survey of the western country by the government and that maps be made: "The expense attending such an undertaking could not be great; the advantages would be unbounded; for sure I am, nature has made such a display of her bounties in those regions, that the more the country is explored, the more it will rise in estimation, consequently the greater will be the revenue to the Union."

The ordinance of 1787, as approved by Congress, was a combination of the two plans. Washington, because of its better system and protection of rights, favored the New England plan, with the modifications necessary to give larger grants of lands to settlers than prevailed under the more or less restricted Township plan.

In writing to Hugh Williamson, on March 15, 1785, Washington said concerning the open West, that settlements "ought not to be too diffusive. Compact and progressive settling will give strength to the Union, admit law and good government, and federal aids at an early period. Sparse settlements in the several new states, or a large territory for one, will have direct contrary effects; and whilst it opens a large field to land jobbers and speculators, who are prowling about

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likes wolves in many shapes, will injure the real occupiers and useful citizens and consequently the public interest." He pointed out the danger of disputes with the Indians and did not want the new country overrun by a "parcel of banditti," who would grab the best lands before the soldiers and officers could obtain their rewards and permanent settlers be found.

The western settlers continually opposed the restrictions of the plan adopted, and time has brought many modifications. The Great West would have been much more satisfactorily settled both as to the character and contentment of the settlers and the country, had the ideas of Washington prevailed in the government policy; much of the hardship of pioneer life would have been spared, for locators would not have been permitted to sprawl over the region without protection from the Indians and without intelligent guidance and location. Compact community settlements would have been forced on the best lands and gradually the new territory could have been occupied and developed in a business-like manner by tillers of the soil and lumber camps, rather than exploited by so many nomadic bands of land "skinners." The cruel Indian wars might have been prevented.

Believing that the western country should be subdivided into states, Washington had sided with Kentucky years before when it sought autonomy. As President, he followed Maryland's declaration relative to dividing the Northwest into "free, convenient and independent governments,"

For this reason, I have greatly wished to see a plan adopted by which the arts, sciences & Belles Lettres, could be taught in their fullest extent. thereby embracing all the advantages of European tuition with the means of acquiring the liberal knowledge which is necessary to qualify our citizens for the exigencies of public, as well as private life;—and (which with me, is a consideration of great magnitude) by assembling the youth from the different parts of this rising Republic, contributing from their intercourse, and interchange of information, to the removal of prejudices which might perhaps, sometimes arise from local circumstances.

The federal city, from its centrality, and the advantages which, in other respects it must have over any other place in the U. States, ought to be preferred, as a proper site for such a University. — And if a plan can be adopted upon a scale as extensive as I have described; and the execution of it shall commence under favorable auspices, in a reasonable time, with a fair prospect of success, I wish grant, in perpetuity, fifty shares in the navigation of Potomac river towards the endowment of it. —

What

#### WASHINGTON A PROMOTER OF EDUCATION

His contribution of funds for the establishment of a national university in the capital city.



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and, as a necessary measure to perfect this, sought the promulgation of an Indian policy which would insure peace in the territory.

Thomas Jefferson is commonly credited with having suggested the plan for organization of the public domain into states, but the fact is that George Washington first suggested the plan in a letter under date of September 7, 1783, to James Duane, a member of Congress from New York. Thereafter, in October of the same year, Congress adopted a series of resolutions embodying a scheme almost identical with Washington's suggestions. In the regular *Journal of Congress* of October 15, 1783, appears the report of a committee on the subject, wherein it is stated that the members had conferred with Washington. James Duane was chairman of that committee.

President Washington's Indian policy grew out of his personal knowledge of the Indian and the treatment the Indian had experienced and was still receiving from the white man. Insisting that the Indian revolts must be stopped by force, he likewise declared that the encroachments and depredations of the settlers upon the Indians must cease. The rights of each must be protected by laws. The Indian by nature could not be depended upon to till the land; and while the white man was entitled to make it productive, the Indian must be compensated for the loss of the lands, if the government should deprive him of them.

Edmund Pendleton wrote Washington in January 1795

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protesting against the policy then discussed of settling the continual war with the Six Nations by paying each Indian an annuity. In reply Washington made his policy clear:

"I accord fully in opinion with yourself, that the plan of annual presents, in an abstract view, unaccompanied with other measures, is not the best mode of treating ignorant savages, from whose hostile conduct we experience much distress; but it is not to be forgotten, that they in turn are not without serious causes of complaint, from the encroachments which are made on their lands by our people, who are not to be restrained by any law now in being, or likely to be enacted. They, poor wretches, have no press through which their grievances are related; and it is well known, that, when one side only of a story is heard and often repeated the human mind becomes impressed with it insensibly. The annual presents, however, to which you allude, are not given so much with a view to purchase peace, as by way of contribution for injuries not otherwise to be redressed. Their people are very much irritated by the continual pressure of land speculators and settlers on one hand, and on the other by the impositions of unauthorized and unprincipled traders, who rob them, in a manner, of their hunting. Nothing but the strong arm of the Union, or, in other words, adequate law can correct their abuses. But here jealousies and prejudices, from which I apprehend more fatal consequences to this government than from any

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other source, aided by local situations, and perhaps by interested considerations, always oppose themselves to efficient measures.

“My communications to Congress, at the last and present sessions, have proceeded upon ideas similar to those expressed in your letter, namely, to make fair treaties with the savage tribes (by this I mean, that they shall perfectly understand every article and clause of them, from correct and repeated interpretations); that their treaties shall be held sacred, and the infractors on either side punished exemplarily; and to furnish them plentifully with goods, under wholesome regulations, without aiming at higher prices than are adequate to cover the cost and charges. If measures like these were adopted, we might hope to live in peace and amity with these borders; but not whilst our citizens, in violation of law and justice, are guilty of offences I have mentioned, and are carrying on unauthorized expeditions against them; and when, for the most atrocious murders, even of those of whom we have the least cause of complaint, a jury on the frontiers can hardly be got to listen to a charge, much less to convict a culprit.”

In an address to the Six Nations in 1790 the President stated the policy which has since prevailed in Indian affairs: “The General Government will never consent to your being defrauded, but will protect you in all your just rights.” Following this doctrine the Supreme Court of the United



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States in 1823 held that the tribal title to its lands was a right of occupancy, and in 1895 affirmed it in another decision. The English doctrine was that the new country having been acquired by discovery and not by conquest, the Indian had no land rights. Washington zealously maintained that the Indian was the ward of the nation and no state could decide any questions affecting him.

We must not overlook Washington's part in the acquiring and planning of the City of Washington. In 1790 when the ten square miles for the city was accepted by the government, he was accused of having in mind a location which would enhance the value of Mount Vernon. On the contrary, being fully imbued with the idea of water transportation as the basis of a great city, he visualized at this location on his beloved Potomac the junction of inland and lake navigation, which destined the city to be, as he declared, the "greatest commercial emporium" in the United States. He still was under the spell of the Potomac Company plan for making the river a link in the connection with the Great Lakes.

Pacing off himself the metes and bounds of the city, he made a deal with the owners of private lands within the site to convey free of cost to the government all the ground needed for streets, avenues, and public reservations. On June 19, 1791, nineteen owners of lands within the limits of the Federal city were induced by him to convey their lands to Thomas Beale and John M. Gantt, as trustees, who were

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to convey them in turn, as required, to the President of the United States.

"This being accomplished, I called the several subscribers together and made known to them the spots on which I meant to place the buildings for the P. and Executive departments of the Government—and for the legislative of Do.—a Plat was also laid before them of the city in order to convey to them general ideas of the city but they were told that some deviation from it would take place—particularly in the diagonal streets or avenues, which would not be so numerous; and in the removal of the President's house more westerly for the advantage of higher ground—they were also told that a town house, or exchange wd. be placed on some convenient ground between the spots designated for the public buildings before mentioned—and it was with much pleasure that a general approbation of the measure seemed to pervade the whole."

Later Washington induced the landholders about Georgetown and Carrollsburgh to cease their jealousies and bickerings within the "Federal City," demonstrating to them how the land retained by them would become much more valuable thereby.

All the land thus secured was divided into lots and apportioned between the government and the owners. The smaller lots received by the government were sold, and the proceeds paid for the additional larger lots which the gov-

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

ernment was compelled to purchase. No money was advanced by the government for the land. It secured seventeen of the choicest plots, on one of which the Capitol now stands, totaling about five hundred and forty-one acres, for \$35,000; and its ten thousand one hundred and thirty-six building lots which brought \$850,000, are today worth more than \$50,000,000. Washington repeatedly conferred with the commissioners, surveyors, and engineers, "with respect to the mode of laying out the district, surveying the grounds for the city and forming them into lots." The President proposed the establishing of sales agencies for these lots in all the states and cities, but was overruled in this, and a lottery was substituted.

During the sale of government lots in 1793 to raise building funds, Washington purchased, largely to stimulate interest, four of the lots, two of them in the worst location so as to prove that he was not being favored in the sale. The only two worth-while properties he purchased were lots 6 and 16 and Square 634 on the west side of North Capitol Street between B and C streets (now Indiana Avenue), for which he paid \$606.96 in cash and \$357.14 in two annual installments. General financial conditions in the country retarded the building up of the Capitol city. In May, 1798, Thomas Law writes Washington: "An example alone is wanting to encourage permanent building. Pardon the liberty I take in suggesting to you how much your building one house at this crisis would ensure the rapid

## THE PUBLIC BUSINESS

rise of the City by doing away with doubts. . . . Your name would effect much. I speak my most solemn sentiment when I say that some measure of the kind is necessary lest this year should pass away and Congress depute a member to report whether accommodations are ready or preparing for Congress."

This was just the sort of appeal to reach Washington. Here he had a chance to start something moving. Accordingly, as soon as he was released from his duties as Commander in Chief of the Army, the fear of war with France having been dissipated, he set about building two houses on his lots. Doctor William Thornton, the architect of the Capitol building, planned and superintended the construction. Washington also purchased five shares of the capital stock of the "Eastern Branch Hotel," erected on the southwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 9th Street, N.E., which was built by William Tunnicliff.

When his eight years of service as President expired, the country was at peace with the world. A policy of non-interference with European politics was established; no more dangers from the Indians were to be apprehended; the country was open for settlement to the Ohio river; navigation of the Mississippi was free to the Gulf of Mexico; canals and internal improvements had tied the states together and brought general prosperity; financial difficulties had vanished; and all Europe recognized the new nation and looked for its rapid growth.

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Writing to the selectmen of Boston, July 28, 1795, in response to a resolution of theirs protesting against the signing of the Jay treaty with England, he discloses the spirit which actuated his policies as President:

"In every act of my administration, I have sought the happiness of my fellow citizens. My system for the attainment of this object has uniformly been to overlook all personal, local, and partial considerations; to contemplate the United States as one great whole; to confide, that sudden impressions, when erroneous, would yield to candid reflection; and to consult only the substantial and permanent interests of our country."

In reference to the many perplexing problems confronting him as President, and especially the widespread opposition to the Jay treaty, he said: "There is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth and pursue it steadily."

In a letter to General Knox, written during his first term, Washington says, concerning his occupancy of the Presidency:

"I am sensible that I am embarking the voice of the people, and a good name of my own, on this voyage; but what returns will be made for them Heaven alone can foretell. Integrity and firmness are all I can promise. These, be the voyage long or short, shall never forsake me, although I may be deserted by all men."

## THE PUBLIC BUSINESS

Writing Colonel Hamilton, about the same time, a hope is expressed which in varying form was often said to others: "Still I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain (what I consider the most enviable of all titles) the character of an honest man."

Washington was solicitous that his name and character should always remain untarnished both in public and private life. He coveted a good name. This was his reason for desiring the public to be constantly reminded of his probity of purpose in every act.

He brought to the office of President the mind of a trained experimenter and observer. When a law was enacted, he wanted it to be enforced and tested, keeping in close touch with the people and the march of events, so that when changes were found necessary, they would be the result of experience and accumulated knowledge. It is needless to say that he had great difficulty in leading Congress to take this view. He was very much disturbed by the animosity between Hamilton and Jefferson, and the disputations they indulged in troubled him. The practical problems confronting the government made theoretical and philosophical discussions a waste of time to him. Property as well as human rights were to him equally to be protected under the Constitution. Jefferson was later, when President, to experience a change of mind in regard to most of the things he had disapproved as a Cabinet officer

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

and to declare, "what is practical must often control what is pure theory."

Political parties were inimical to economical business administration, and Washington viewed their formation with alarm. It has often been charged that Washington was dominated by Hamilton; but no one willing to give a fair consideration to the Washington character can arrive at any such conclusion, and Washington's first veto of an act of Congress disproves it. Following the census of 1790, Congress passed a law providing that representation in the House should be 113, on the basis of one for each 30,000 of the population. The measure came to the President for his approval or veto. An attack on the bill was made by those who claimed that while the act provided for 113 members who must be apportioned to the several states according to the ratio of their population to that of all the states, the Constitution meant that any ratio of representation fixed by Congress must apply within the several states and not to the population of the whole country. The President submitted the act to his cabinet. Hamilton and Knox were for its approval; Jefferson and Randolph opposed it as invading the rights of the states. Washington, agreeing with the latter, vetoed the bill.

The last six years of the Presidency were occupied largely with the working out of the principles established during the first two years. Working tools had to be forged; systems devised, tested, and changed, while pursuing a steady,

## THE PUBLIC BUSINESS

direct, constitutional course. The President was adamant to the opposition which gradually developed to his nationalistic views. The people had made him their general manager, approving his well known ideas, and he never wavered in carrying out business policies which he believed would return large dividends to the people by way of the general welfare of the country.

The business system he had hoped for and started under the constitution had been molded into a considerable degree of perfection under his guidance before his second term expired. He refused to serve longer, deeming himself, rather than the public, to be entitled to his remaining years.

His farewell address was his transfer of the nation's affairs into the hands of another, who, profiting by his experience and example, would, he believed, wisely develop the enterprise to which he had contributed the ripest years of his life.



## CHAPTER XVI

### LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

THROUGHOUT Washington's life he was thinking and planning and writing about land. For instance in 1793 he asks his secretary, Tobias Lear, to inquire for a farm manager for his Fayette and Washington County lands: "For I am sure it will not do to leave it in the hands of Colo. Cannon; who if nothing else is against him, is too dependent for his election as representative of the latter county to fix my rents at a just medium, or to collect them in a manner he ought to do, lest his popularity should be effected by it."

In 1793, he requests Lear in London to secure a blacksmith: "He must however have a character on which you can rely, not only as a competent workman for a farm, but as an honest, sober and industrious man. If he comes on wages, they must be moderate; & with or without wages, he must be bound to serve me three years—four would be better."

In 1794 the President was pressed for money and determined to sell his lands in western Virginia and Pennsylvania "that I may be enabled (knowing precisely what my dependence is) to do as much good with it as the resources will admit—for altho' in the estimation of the world, I

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

possess a good and clear estate, yet so unproductive is it, that I am often times ashamed to refuse aids which I cannot afford, unless I was to sell part of it to answer the purpose."

These lands, he says,

"are contained in four Patents;—the first beginning within two miles of the mouth of that River & contain 10,990 Acres of the richest bottom, stretching 17 or 18 miles along the River. The next of 7276 acres, is a little above the last on the opposite side of the River, & the other two are still higher up at the mouth of, and on Coal River; both are of the first quality and containing together abt. 5,000 Acres.

"Although it is my wish to convert these Lands into cash on the terms and for the purposes mentioned, yet for reasons which will readily occur to you, I would not hawk them about as some do, if they were never to be sold."

The price on the Ohio and "Kanhawa" lands is fixed at "twenty shillings Virga. Currency P. acre,"; on the 1700 acres in Fayette County at 40 shillings per acre, and the 3000 acres in Washington County at "30 shillings Pr. Acre, Pennsylvania Currency."

His idea was to turn this property into cash to invest in income-paying securities, then called "Specialties," for the currency of the nation had by that time been reasonably established.

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He was always bothered about house servants. Hence he writes:

"On the 28th. I wrote you two letters. In one of them I intended (but forgot it) to have made a request that you would enquire after the lad that used to wait at Suter's (William I think his name was) whose servitude has expired, and if disengaged and his character good, as well as handy, to engage him for me at eight Dollars P. Month, (with the other allowances known to you) being what I am now obliged to give, to the most indifferent set of servants I ever had. When I mention William I do not mean to confine myself to him, although his qualifications as a *waiter* (the only light in which he has appeared to me) to be very good;—any other genteel looking and well made man (not a giant or dwarf) might answer equally well perhaps, if sober, honest, good tempered, and acquainted with the duties of a house servant & footman."

The securing of an engineer for the Potomac Company who could construct proper locks at the Great Falls was a professional problem revealed by a letter of December 21, 1794:

"The plan of Mr. Claiborne's engineer, as far as I understand is to avoid locks altogether. The vessels are received into a Basket or Cradle, and let down by means of a laver and pullies; and raised again by weights at the hinder ex-

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

tremity of the lever, which works on an axis at the head of a substantial post, fixed about the center of the lever. . . . My doubts of the utility of both arises, first from the insufficiency of any machinery of this sort to bear the weight of the Cradle when charged with water & a loaded boat therein; and its aptness to get out of order by means thereof;—secondly I do not find they are in general use;—and thirdly—because if I recollect rightly—Mr. Weston has told me (but of this I am not certain) that no method of raising and lowering boats has been found equal to that of locks,—still, as I observed in my last, I should be for hearing the opinions & explanations of any and every scientific and practical character that could be easily got at, on the subject,—& therefore would hear Claiborne's engineer as well as Mr. Weston;—especially as he professes to be particularly well skilled in the application of steam, in propelling boats (in an easy and cheap manner) against the stream;—and in conducting of water to cities, or for any other purpose whatever.”

January 12, 1795, he writes that the New York Company had given permission for Mr. Weston to visit the falls, and feeling that there will not be sufficient money in the company's treasury “for carrying on navigation” he advises: “On an abstract of the case, I should give it as my opinion, without hesitation, that the present shareholders ought to continue their advances till the final completion;—& for

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this plain and interesting reason (with me) that no speculation to which money can be applied will be more productive, with so much honor, and so little risque."

He advocates increasing the number of shares of stock and the sale to the public, or borrowing the money, for "No doubt remains in my mind of what will be the productiveness of the tolls when the navigation is in full operation. To the best of my recollection they were calculated to amount (at the time of passing the acts of incorporation) to 15 P. Cent on the Capitol, by an estimate that was made of the several articles which for their contiguity to the River it was known would be water borne. Since that period the population of the counties bordering on the Potomac & of course the produce arising therefrom has increased greatly, and when the Shenandoah is added thereto (which formed no part of the Original estimate) it must equal the most sanguine expectation."

He suggests that the opinion of Claiborne's engineers be secured before Weston's, in whom he had great confidence: "He will not adopt their opinion contrary to his experience and judgment; but if his opinion is first taken and transpires, it may be given into by them for the want of these in themselves, endeavoring thereby to erect a character on his foundation."

February 18, 1795, Lear is informed that Weston is coming, and to see that he has full opportunity of observation,

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and regrets that because of a "public day (in what is called the Levee Room)" he was not able to have more of a talk with Weston.

May 25, 1795, Washington sends Lear \$960 and an order for \$3,430.67 to purchase stock in the Bank of Alexandria or Bank of Columbia, as he "shall deem it most advisable and advantageous." Later he adds \$3,000 more and says: "Let the call for ten Dollars on each share purchased in the Bank of Columbia be included;—because until I receive payment for some land which I have sold, or the cash for my flour, &c.—which is not yet due, I shall not have it in my power to apply a further sum to this use."

Lear purchased some of the shares of both banks and accounted to Washington, who replied with usual caution: "Your preference for the former for the appropriation of the balance which remain in your hands, is accordant with my ideas; and unless you have very good reasons to believe that the shares may be had at par by delaying the purchase of them, it might be as well perhaps to buy at the prices now governing (especially if the overplus will meet compensation in the dividend) as to await for a fall."

November 2, 1795, he writes regarding real estate: "If you have not already agreed for the rent of my house in Alexandria @ sixty pounds Pr. Annum, I wish this sum might be compared with other rents, before it is fixed on. I was told by several as I passed through Alexandria, that

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I might readily dispose of the lot, if I was so inclined, for £1200;—sixty pounds rent would only be an interest of 5 P. Cent—which is inadequate for house rent.”

December 21, 1795, Lear is told that there are “twenty-five Hhds. Tobo” in the warehouse at Alexandria, of the best sort, put up dry. The Alexandria price is “18/. P. Hundred Wt.” while in “George Town” it might be a guinea. The transference of it to a Georgetown warehouse is suggested, if it can be done without loss or publicity, but fears that the inspection at Georgetown might not be as favorable on quality as that already given at Alexandria. Later Lear is directed to sell the tobacco as best he can because public matters prevent further consideration of the subject.

March 13, 1796, he offers to purchase Lear’s twenty Potomac Company shares, saying, regarding this investment: “If my present purpose and gratification could be answered by prospects of future emolument, I would devote all the money I could command, to this Investiture;—but for the few years I have to remain here, the enjoyment of less, with ease and certainty, will be more conservient and desirable.”

His lifelong interest in real estate was shown March 21, 1796:

“As I have a prospect from the high price of flour, of raising five or six thousand dollars from the sale of it; it

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might be eligible with that sum & the sale of the vacant lot (to Summers) to make the purchase suggested in one of your former letters to me? If that property is in an eligible place (and I wish to know where it lies) or whether or not if it would bring ten P. Cent on the purchase money, it would certainly be more immediately advantageous to me than to let a part of the sum, necessary to command it, lay dead in a vacant lot, which when built on, would only be to let."

On April 4, 1796, Washington gives instructions: ". . . if a vessel from Liverpool called the *Commerce*, commanded by Capt. Tuttle should arrive at George Town, that Mr. Pearce may have immediate notice of it, as there will be in it two sacks of field Peas and some other seed for me in her, which ought now to be in the ground."

When preparing his return to Mount Vernon as an Ex-President, he writes Lear, March 9, 1797, specific instructions about packing and sending certain household effects from the Presidential residence to Mount Vernon, facetiously remarking: "On one side I am called upon to remember the Parrot, on the other to remember the dog. For my own part I should not pine much if both were forgot." Further instructions next day are to purchase "new carpeting as will cover the floor of my blue Parlour. That it may accord with the furniture it ought to have a good deal of blue in it;—and if Wilton is not much dearer than Scotch



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Carpeting—I would prefer the former.” Later he writes that the principal flowers in it ought to be blue, with a proper border. In other letters which follow he instructs him to send the Bellows and Vessels “in which ashes are carried out” and to purchase one “of those Thermometers” that “tells the State of the Mercury within 24 hours” and to see that the White House is “made clean and delivered up in good order. . . . The furniture belonging to the public ought to have been well cleaned, as well as the Rooms before they are turned over to the President’s order, with the Papers.” Before Washington retired, he made an inventory, which is preserved, in his own handwriting, of the furniture and household articles belonging to the government, and also one of his personal belongings.

Lear at one time desired to lease the River Farm; but Washington having rented it for a year, promises it to him after that time and informs him, September 11, 1797, of the lease plan, saying that the conditions will be specific “and exacted from the Tenant whomsoever he may be” and referring to the woodland, “not an acre of which will be suffered to be cleared.” In Washington’s will, this land is left to Lear and his wife for life without rental.

October 24, 1797: Lear desires to borrow \$3,000. Washington answers that this is more than he has in the Bank of Alexandria, and he does not want to sell his bank stock to raise the money: “Had you asked for a thousand dollars of those, or if that sum would answer any valuable purpose

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

I would, inconvenient as it might prove to me, give a check on the Bank."

August 2, 1798, regarding the annual election of officers of the Potomac Company, Washington writes: "Monday next being the day fixed on by the Constitution of the Potomac Company for their annual meeting, and as you seemed resolved to relinquish your present office as President—I wish you would turn your thought attentively to the solution of it, and revolve seriously on characters fit, and proper to supply the places, of those who perhaps ought to, as well as those who will quit the Directorship; that our struggle in that interesting and expensive concern—the labour of years, may not end in disgrace & loss."

At one time during his residence in Philadelphia, Washington was forced to retire to Mount Vernon because of the yellow fever epidemic, and had time to take up his agricultural affairs for a period. Recalling a threshing-machine General Henry Lee had recommended, a request is sent him for particulars concerning it:

"The model (of a threshing machine) brought over by the English farmers, may also be a good one, but the utility of it among careless negroes and ignorant overseers will depend absolutely upon the simplicity of the construction; for if there is anything complex in the machinery, it will

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be no longer in use than a mushroom in existence. I have seen so much of the beginning and ending of new inventions, that I have almost resolved to go on in the old way of treading until I get settled again at home, and can attend, myself, to the management of one. As a proof in point of the almost impossibility of putting the overseers of this country out of the track they have been accustomed to walk in, I have one of the most convenient barns in this or perhaps in any other country, where thirty hands may with great ease be employed in threshing. Half of the wheat of the farm was actually stored in this barn in the straw by my order for threshing; notwithstanding, when I came home about the middle of September, I found a treading yard not thirty feet from the barn door, the wheat again brought out of the barn, and horses treading it out in an open exposure, liable to the Vicissitudes of weather."

In January, 1790, the diary records that, while riding, a stop was made at the home of Baron de Polnitz to see a threshing machine in operation. A minute description of the workings of the machine is given as follows: "Upon the whole, it appears to be an easier, more expeditious and much cleaner way of getting out grain than by the usual mode of threshing and vastly to be preferred to treading, which is hurtful to horses, filthy to the wheat, and not more expeditious, considering the numbers that are employed in the process from the time the head is begun

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to be formed until the grain has passed finally through the fan." In 1797 a threshing machine was put in operation at Mount Vernon.

During his Presidency, the manager at Mount Vernon was required, once in each week, to send a full report of the affairs on each of the farms. The following pages show a sample of those reports. Sparks says: "In the meteorological table, the figures denote the state of the thermometer, and the initial letters the direction of the wind. The design of this table was to communicate a knowledge of the weather, by which a more correct judgment could be formed of the amount of time that the laborers could properly be employed at their work. Each report was accompanied with an explanatory letter from the manager, containing other particulars. These were regularly answered once a week by the President, and sometimes oftener. His letters frequently filled two or three sheets, closely written. The importance he attached to these letters, and his diligence in preparing them, may be understood from the fact that he first made rough drafts, which were copied out by himself in a fair hand before they were sent off. Press-copies were then taken, which he preserved. This habit was pursued, without intermission, from the beginning to the end of the presidency."

Nothing is so revealing as to Washington's systematic business method as the periodic reports of his farm man-

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

agers; he had the modern proprietor's desire for classified records and reports. Here are some examples of this business literature:

### *Manager's Weekly Report*

April 14, 1792

#### Meteorological Table

|       |         | <i>Morning</i> |    | <i>Noon</i>     |    | <i>Night</i> |
|-------|---------|----------------|----|-----------------|----|--------------|
| April | 8th     | E. Clear       |    | S. E. Cloudy    |    | S. E. Rain   |
| "     | 9th     | S. E. Rain     |    | S. E. Cloudy    |    | S. E. Cloudy |
| "     | 10th    | S. W. Cloudy   |    | S. W. Cloudy    |    | S. E. Rain   |
| "     | 11th 58 | E. Rain        |    | S. E. Rain      | 58 | S. E. Rain   |
| "     | 12th 58 | N. E. Rain     | 56 | N. E. Hard Rain | 54 | N. E. Cloudy |
| "     | 13th 52 | N. E. Cloudy   | 56 | N. E. Rain      | 58 | N. E. Rain   |
| "     | 14th 54 | N. W. Cloudy   | 58 | N. W. Cloudy    | 52 | N. W. Clear  |

| <i>Dr.</i>  | <i>Days</i> |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Mansion-House Farm</i> for the work of 12 men, 6 boys and 4 girls, amounting per week to | 132         |

| <i>Cr.</i>   |            |
|--|------------|
| By wagon hauling posts and rails to Ferry-Barn lane  | 1          |
| By do. hauling hay 1, stocks 1, timber for shafts for carts and moving park rails, 1,              | 3          |
| By hauling 6 barrels sale to Major Washington's landing, and bringing home straw                   | 1          |
| By carts hauling manure from Ferry Barn to No. 2 French's  | 6          |
| By cleaning loose manure about stables, and hauling it to lots intended for lucerne                | 5          |
| By hauling corn from Ferry, and bran and meal from Mill wood to Mansion                            | 2          |
| By hauling stones to repair the crossing-place of Muddy-Hole Swamp, at the head of French's meadow | 2          |
| By Old Jack in care of granary 6, Old Frank in care of Stock 6                                     | 12         |
| By Peter, in care of mares, mules, and jacks   | 6          |
| By Gunner digging brick-earth 3, cutting poles to build a brick house 2                            | 5          |
| By putting up post-and-rail fence leading to Ferry Barn  | 5          |
| By hauling seine, cleaning, striking, and packing fish   | 41         |
| By Easter Monday   | 22         |
| By sickness Boatswain 6, Mima 3, Richmond 3, Postillion Joe 3, Lynna 3, Sam 3                      | 21         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>132</b> |

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

Increase 2 Calves and 2 Mules. Received from Mill, 22 bushels of Meal, and 29 bushels of Bran; from Ferry, 3 barrels of Corn. Stock, 11 head of Cattle, 4 Calves, 60 Sheep, 28 Lambs, 4 working Mares, 4 do. horses, 5 Colts, 4 Spring do., 2 Jacks, 2 old Jennies, 1 do. three years old, 1 do. two years old, 1 do. one year old, 15 mules, 10 one year old, 2 spring do.; and 11 Mares.

| Dr.  | <i>Days</i> |
|--|-------------|
| <i>Ditchers</i> , for the work of 6 men, amounting per week to       | 36          |
| Cr.  |             |
| By Baths and Pashal mortising posts 1, fencing Ferry-Barn new lane 4 | 10          |
| By Boatswain and Robin mauling rails 1, and fencing as above 4       | 10          |
| By Charles hauling seine   | 5           |
| By Dundee sawing trunnels with Dogue-Run hands                       | 5           |
| By Easter Monday   | 6           |
| Total  | 36          |

N.B. There has been almost one day and part of another lost by rain this week.

| Dr.   | <i>Days</i> |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Muddy-Hole Farm</i> for the work of 3 men and 9 women, amounting per week to | 72          |
| Cr.   |             |
| By listing in No. 2   | 4           |
| By a cart hauling stakes and trunnels to the fence between Nos. 1 and 7         | 3           |
| By hauling rails to No. 1 Lane fence  | 1           |
| By raising the bank with a plough and hoes between No. 1 and No. 7              | 11          |
| By putting up fences on said bank 19, cutting stakes and trunnels for do. 7     | 26          |
| By taking down and new setting the Lane fence of No. 1                          | 7           |
| By Easter Monday  | 12          |
| By sickness, Kate 3, Amy 2, Molly 3   | 8           |
| Total   | 72          |

Received from Mill 6 bushels of Meal, and 6 bushels of Rye Meal—Stock 37 head of Cattle, 5 Calves, 30 Sheep, 8 working Horses and 1 Mule.

| Dr.  | <i>Days</i> |
|--|-------------|
| <i>Ferry and French's Farms</i> for the work of 7 men, 16 women and four boys, amounting per week to | 162         |

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

| CR.  | <i>Days</i> |
|--|-------------|
| By listing new ground in French's meadow   | 16          |
| By carts hauling stakes, rails, and trunnels to different fences                   | 6           |
| By hauling manure to No. 2 French's 3; hauling corn to mill 1                      | 4           |
| By repairing fences, 34; burning logs and brush in the swamp 30                    | 64          |
| By heaping manure 4, beating out corn 4, cutting and mauling stakes and trunnels 4 | 12          |
| By spinning 3, hauling seine 5, French's Tom at Mansion-house 5                    | 13          |
| By Easter Monday   | 27          |
| By sickness, Doll 6, Old Daph, 5, Betty 4, Rose 3, Delia 2                         | 20          |
| Total  | 162         |

Increase, 2 Calves and 5 Lambs. Received from Mill, 12¼ bushels of Meal, sent do. 53 bushels of Corn. To Mansion-house 3 barrels of do., feed to horses 1 barrel of do.—Stock, 83 head of Cattle, 5 Calves, 136 Sheep, 60 Lambs, 16 working horses and 2 Mules.

| DR.   | <i>Days</i> |
|---|-------------|
| <i>River Farm</i> for the work of 9 men, 18 women and 1 girl, amounting per week to | 168         |
| <hr/>   |             |
| CR.   |             |
| By listing in No. 6   | 10          |
| By carts hauling manure on do.  | 6           |
| By hauling rails 2, toing to Mill 1   | 3           |
| By loading carts with manure 6, cutting straw                                       | 9           |
| By plashing thorn-hedge 4, repairing the bank of Lane fence No. 6, 2                | 6           |
| By stopping hog-hole in do. 6, putting up new fences next to the woods of do. 18    | 24          |
| By cutting cornstalks and getting them off  | 56          |
| Lost by rain, or very little done   | 20          |
| By Easter Monday  | 28          |
| By Cornelia in childbed   | 6           |
| Total   | 168         |

Increase, 2 Calves. Received from Mill 9¾ bushels of Meal and 10 bushels of Rye Meal.—Stock, 83 head of Cattle, 5 Calves, 221 Sheep, 45 Lambs, 4 working Mares, 13 working Horses, and 1 Mule.

| DR.  | <i>Days</i> |
|--|-------------|
| <i>Dogue-Run Farm</i> for the work of 6 men, 8 women, and 2 girls, amounting per week to | 96          |

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

| CR.   | Days |
|---|------|
| By listing in No. 2, 5, by ploughing in Mill meadow 2             | 7    |
| By raising a bank with a plough and hoes in Mill meadow for fence | 19   |
| By sawing trunnels 5, mauling do. 5, cutting in Mill meadow 2     | 12   |
| By repairing fence around the middle meadow                       | 10   |
| By repairing fence around No. 2, 7, by spinning 2                 | 9    |
| By hauling post and rails to Ferry-Barn, new Lane                 | 5    |
| By hauling rails to Mill meadow fence                             | 3    |
| By hauling rails to the middle meadow fence                       | 2    |
| By Easter Monday  | 16   |
| By sickness, Grace 3, Molly 3, Sall. 3, Cicely 4                  | 13   |
| Total   | 96   |

Received from Mill,  $6\frac{3}{4}$  bushels of Meal.—Stock, 57 head of Cattle, 1 Calf, 124 Sheep, 9 working Horses and 1 Mule.

| DR.   | Days |
|---|------|
| <i>Joiners and Carpenters</i> for the work of 6 men and 2 boys, amounting per week to | 48   |

| CR.  |   |
|--|---|
| By Thomas Green making sashes for the new quarter                                  | 5 |
| By Mahony putting up the berths in do.   | 5 |
| By Isaac making and mending ploughs 4, getting ash for rake-handles 1              | 5 |
| By Jam making a new cart and shafts, and getting beach stocks for planes           | 5 |
| By Sambo and David sawing gate-stuff, 2, getting stocks and ash for rake handles 6 | 8 |
| By Sambo ripping plank on account of rain  | 1 |
| By David with Isaac on account of do.  | 1 |
| By Joe planing Plank   | 5 |
| By Christopher at do. 4, and 1 day with the wagon                                  | 5 |
| By Easter Monday   | 8 |

| DR. | CR. | Total | 48 |
|-----|-----|-------|----|
|-----|-----|-------|----|

### Mill for Sundries

|                    | Corn             |                         | Meal             | Bran | Rye Meal |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------|----------|
| Ferry and French's | 53               | By Dogue-Run Plantation | 6 $\frac{3}{4}$  |      |          |
| Toll Corn receiver | 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  | By River Plantation     | 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  |      | 10       |
|                    |                  | By Muddy Hole           | 6                |      | 6        |
| Total Received     | 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ | By Mansion-House        | 22               | 29   |          |
| Toll Corn ground   | 56               | By Ferry and French's   | 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ |      |          |
|                    |                  | Total Delivered         | 56 $\frac{3}{4}$ | 29   | 16       |
|                    |                  | By Coopers and Miller   | 1                |      |          |



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

It was difficult to secure and hold a competent manager at Mount Vernon. In October 1793, Washington employed William Pearce as his manager at "a hundred guineas pr. annum" although he thought the amount more than the Mount Vernon estate could stand, yet "the satisfaction of having a person in whom confidence can be placed" was the deciding factor. The correspondence with Pearce has been preserved, and from it we gather further knowledge of our subject:

"As I am never sparing (with proper economy) in furnishing my Farms with any, and every kind of Tool and Implement that is calculated to do good and neat work, I not only authorize you to bring the kind of ploughs you were speaking to me about, but any others, the utility of which you have proved from your experience,—particularly a kind of hand rake which Mr. Stuart tells me are used in the Eastern Shore of Maryland in lieu of Hoes for corn at a certain state of its growth—and a Scythe and Cradle different from those used with us, and with which the grain is laid much better.—In short I shall begrudge no reasonable expense that will contribute to the improvement and neatness of my Farm;—for nothing pleases me better than to see them in good order, and everything trim and handsome, and thriving about them;—nor nothing hurts me more than to find them otherwise, and the tools and implements laying

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

wherever they were last used, exposed to injuries from Rain, sun &c.”

November 24, 1793, he writes Pearce that as it is very difficult to raise a sufficiency of manure on the place and as the land requires “something to loos and ameliorate,” he has decided to grow buckwheat for a “green manure” and also to be fed as a substitute for Indian corn to the horses and cattle. Also he instructs him to increase the crop of oats and to buy seed free from onions.

Fertilization of the soil was then, as it still is, a primary need in successful tillage. It was slowly and grudgingly resorted to by the colonial farmers, who rested on their faith in the ever constant endurance of the virgin ground. It had been for years an absorbing subject to Washington. December 18, 1793, he writes Pearce in modern terms: “I am sensible more might be made from the farms for a year or two—but my object is to recover the fields from the exhausted state into which they have fallen, by oppressive crops, and to restore them (if possible by any means in my power) to health and vigour;—but two ways will enable them to accomplish this.—The first is to cover them with as much manure as possible (winter and summer).—The 2nd a judicious succession of crops.”

The carefully worked out crop rotation list is sent. Complaint is made of the indifference to his instructions: “All these Overseers as you will perceive by their agree-

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

ments which I herewith send, are on standing wages; and this with men who are not actuated by the principles of honor and honesty, and not very regardful of their characters, lead naturally to indulgence—as their profits, whatever may be mine, are the same whether they are at a horse race or on the farm—whether they are entertaining company (which I believe is too much the case) in their own houses or are in the field with the Negroes . . . Admonish them in a calm, but firm manner of its consequences. If this proves ineffectual, discharge them, at any season of the year without scruple or hesitation, and do not pay them a copper; putting the noncompliance with their agreement in bar.

“To treat them civilly is no more than what all men are entitled to, but, my advice to you is, to keep them at a proper distance; for they will grow upon familiarity, in proportion as you will sink in authority, if you do not.—Pass by no faults or neglects (especially at first) for overlooking one only serves to generate another, and it is more than probably that some of them (one in particular) will try, at first, what lengths he may go.—A steady and firm conduct, with an inquisitive inspection into, and a proper arrangement of everything on your part, will though it may give trouble at first, save a great deal in the end—and you may rest assured that in everything that is just, and proper to be done is your part, (you) shall meet with the fullest support on mine,—nothing will contribute more to

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

effect these desirable purposes than a good example—unhappily this was not set (from what I have learnt lately) by Mr. Whiting who, it is said, drank freely—kept bad company in my house in Alexandria,—and was a very debauched person—wherever this is the case it is not easy for a man to throw the first stone for fear of having it returned to him;—and this I take to be the true cause why Mr. Whiting did not look more scrupulously into the conduct of the Overseers, and more minutely into the smaller matters belonging to the Farms—which though individually (they) may be trifling; are not so found in the aggregate; for there is no addage more true than an old Scotch one ‘many mickles make a muckle.’”

This letter closes with the Golden Rule of a business man: “To correct the abuses which have crept into all parts of my business—to arrange it properly, and to reduce things to system; will require, I am sensible, a good deal of time and your utmost exertion; of the last, from the character you bear, I entertain no doubt; the other, I am willing to allow, because I had rather you should probe things to the bottom, whatever time it may require to do it, than to act hastily upon the first view of them; as *to establish good rules, and a regular system, is the life, and the soul of every kind of business.*”

From Washington’s letters to Pearce, usually written once a week, we find him asking for more detailed information

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

on the character of the wheat stacks, the price of sales and the supply on hand; directing the "breaking" of more steers for ploughing, and the harrowing and rolling of the land, more continuously; suggesting that the clothing for the gardener at Alexandria should be strong and substantial; expressing disappointment at the lamb crop and directing better breedings; instructing that ground be prepared in advance of arrival of Ship *Peggy* bringing 5000 white thorn plants; that Green, an overseer, should be discharged. ". . . Nothing but compassion for his helpless family, has hitherto induced me to keep him a moment in my service (so bad is the example he sets); but if he has no regard for them himself, it is not to be expected that I am to be a continual sufferer on his account for his misconduct."

Desiring more information about the buckwheat, he says: "As fast as the field, or lot is planted with Potatoes, let the quantity which has been used therefor, be noted in the Farm report of the place where they have been used.—To plant the Potatoes whole is best, where there is enough of them; when there is not, cutting becomes necessary, and should be adopted."

In declining to extend a further credit to Alex Smith, November 14, 1796, on a purchase of flour, he wrote: ". . . It is from the produce of this flour that Mr. Pearce himself;—all the overseers,—and a variety of other incidental expences, are to be paid;—It is, and ever has been a rule

## LANDS, TILLAGE, AND FINANCIERING

with me, never to suffer a man to look for a just debt without receiving payment."

In February, 1796, the President writes as follows to the Earl of Buchan in England of his plan to lease his farms, desiring him to secure English or Scotch tenants: "The staple produce of the part of the country, in which my Mount Vernon estate lies, being wheat, I mean to fix the rent in that article as most convenient and equitable for both landlord and tenant; and I set it at a bushel and a half for every acre contained in the lease, which will be all arable, with the privileges detailed in the printed notification." Buchan is requested to secure Scotchmen preferably because "slovenly farmers" were all the tenants Mount Vernon could get in Virginia.

Lear's testimony, after living many years with Washington is: "General Washington is, I believe, almost the only man of an exalted character, who does not lose some part of his respectability by an intimate acquaintance. I have never found a single thing that could lessen my respect for him. A complete knowledge of his honesty, uprightness and candor in all his private transactions, has sometimes led me to think him more than a man."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BUSINESS GENERAL RECALLED

EACH return to Mount Vernon seems to have been only a pause between calls to public service. When the power-intoxicated Directory of France in 1798 threatened war against the United States, the retired President had been at his home but a short time. President John Adams, practically without consulting Washington, appointed him the Commander in Chief of the Army. Retirement at Mount Vernon was pleasing in days of peace, yet unendurable when his country was attacked; so the veteran girds up his loins and unsheathes his sword.

The first question which arose in the preparations for the formation of an army was as to whether the staff of the commander should be taken from the "old set" of generals or from the most experienced and intelligent officers of the then existing American Army. Washington urged upon the President and Secretary of War the absolute necessity of selecting the general staff from the best men available from whatever source and that the selection be made at the start, because a mistake in this regard could not be rectified afterwards. His opinion was that the French would attempt an invasion from the South, where they

## THE BUSINESS GENERAL RECALLED

would be near the French inhabitants and where they could arouse the negro slaves to revolt.

In order to retain the loyalty of the South in the event of war, he selected Charles C. Pinckney of South Carolina for Major General. Alexander Hamilton of New York was an absolute necessity; and General Henry Knox of Massachusetts, as Third Major General, would be the most effective Inspector General because of his former experience. Washington was very fond of these three men and considered that for effective and efficient service, the order of rank should be Hamilton, Pinckney, Knox. Realizing that jealousy might arise upon such an announcement, he wrote most tender and affectionate letters to each of these men, appealing to their patriotism and friendship, as sufficient justification for accepting his judgment in these appointments. All but General Knox readily acquiesced. Knox had been the superior officer of the other two in the Revolutionary War, was much older, and considered that he was being demoted. He charged Washington with turning against him and refused to recognize any of the cogent reasons for the order of appointment. The Commander in Chief was deeply affected by the loss of Knox's friendship, but steadfastly refused to change his mind. No one can read the correspondence between these men and conclude that Washington had cold affections. His letters to Knox are veritable love letters. The letter giving Knox the reasons for the order of rank, closes with the words



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

“with that esteem and regard, which you knew I feel for you, I remain your sincere friend and affectionate servant.”

The influence of Knox was such with President Adams that the appointments of the three Major Generals nominated by Washington were made together on the same day without designating rank, but named in order of Knox, Pinckney, and Hamilton. Washington resented this in a vigorous letter to the President, who then stated that the order of rank was left to Washington and that he would stand by his decision. Knox then refused to serve. In writing to the President, Washington says with frankness: “With respect to General Knox, I can say with truth, there is no man in the United States with whom I have had habits of greater intimacy, no one whom I have loved more sincerely, nor for whom I have had a greater friendship. But esteem, love, and friendship can have no influence on my mind when I conceive that the subjugation of our government and independence are the objects aimed at by the enemies of our peace, and when possibly our all is at stake.”

With true Washingtonian system, the supplies and equipment were prescribed for the army, the campaign planned, and the Quarter-master urged into action. The Secretary of War was admonished out of the General's experience: “Above all things direct the keepers of your powder magazines to be attentive to the powder, turning it often, and proving it frequently; otherwise there may appear to

## THE BUSINESS GENERAL RECALLED

be a store, while there is none in fact, that is, none fit to use."

Attention was directed to the clothing of the soldiers, the insignia, dress, and badges designating the officers. He wrote Hamilton and Pinckney on the cockade question: "As there have been many objections to, and remarks made upon, the black cockade (being that of Great Britain), might not something be devised by way of annexation thereto, to distinguish it from that of any other nation? I have seen, and it appeared to have no bad effect, a small eagle (of pewter, tin, and in some instances silver) fixed by way of button in the centre of the rose cockade, which was not only very distinguishable, but somewhat characteristic."

December 13, 1798, James McHenry, Secretary of War, is furnished a detailed outline of the plan for organization of the military force, suggesting uniforms and badges. "It is very material to the due course of military service, that the several classes of any army shall be distinguished from each other by certain known badges, and that there shall be uniformity in dress and equipments subject to these distinctions. The dress itself will indeed constitute a part of them. It is of inferior moment, what they shall be, provided they are conspicuous, economical, and not inconsistent with good appearance, which in an army is far from being a matter of indifference."

The Commander in Chief gave elaborate instructions regarding his own uniform, to be as follows: "A blue coat,

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

with yellow buttons and good epaulets (each having three silver stars) with linings, cape and cuffs of buff; in winter, buff vest and breeches of nankeen. The coat to be without lapels and embroidered on the cape, cuff and pockets. A white plume in the hat, to be a further distinction. The Adjutant-general, the aids and secretaries of the Commander-in-Chief to be likewise distinguished by a white plume."

The uniforms for the general officers, inspector-general, colonels, captains, sergeant-majors and quartermaster-sergeant, musicians, civil staff, and others, are then severally described. His general ideas, simplified considerably, especially in the headgear, have been followed ever since in the American Army. He also adds, from experience: "It cannot fail to happen, that clothing made at a distance from the army will in numerous instances be ill fitted to the persons to whom it is issued. This is an inconvenience, as it respects appearance, comfort and use."

He asserted that the "ration of provisions" then established for the army was extravagant and could not be provided expeditiously, so proposes that the ration of the Revolutionary Army be reinstated as it had been found sufficient "by troops once formed to military habits and acquainted with the best methods of managing their provisions." This was "eighteen ounces of bread or flour, one pound and a quarter of fresh beef, or one pound of salted beef, or three

## THE BUSINESS GENERAL RECALLED

quarters of a pound of salted pork; salt, when fresh meat is issued, at the rate of one quart, and candles at the rate of a pound for every hundred rations." The Commander in Chief was opposed to any quantity of spirituous liquors being a component part of the ration, as experience in the previous war had convinced him that it did the men more harm than good, but advises "allowing a discretion to commanding officers to cause it to be issued in quantities not exceeding half a gill per day, except on extraordinary occasions" and "vinegar also ought to be furnished, when to be had, at the rate of two quarts and soap at the rate of two pounds per hundred rations."

He was sure that flannel shirts would be best for the troops, especially when in the South.

Concern was expressed over a competent engineer corps. "To form them suddenly is impossible. Much previous study and experiment are essential. It is thought advisable to endeavor to introduce into the corps at least one experienced and distinguished engineer and one such officer of artillery from abroad. They may be sought for preferably in the Austrian and next in the Prussian Armies."

In January 1799, the Secretary of War was again in correspondence concerning the Commander's uniform: "On reconsidering the uniform for the Commander-in-Chief, it has become a matter of doubt with me (although, as it respects myself personally, I was against all embroidery)

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

whether embroidery on the cape, cuffs, and pockets of the coat, and none on the buff waistcoat, would not have a disjointed and awkward appearance. It is neither required nor forbidden, which then, in your judgment, or that of connoisseurs, if you should confer with any on the subject, would be most agreeable in itself, and accordant to what is expected? To you I submit the matter, as I also do whether the coat shall have slash cuffs, with blue flaps passing through them and slash pockets, or both shall be in the usual manner.

"These are apparently trifling matters to trouble you with; but, as it is the commencement of a new scene, it is desirable that the thing should take a right direction. . . .

"The eagle, too, has become part of the American cockade. Have any of them been brought into use yet? My idea of the size is, that it ought not to be larger than would cover a quarter of a dollar at most, and should be represented, (for the officers) as clothed with feathers."

On the question of pay he wrote Secretary McHenry: "I feel much obliged and accordingly thank you for ordering me two months' pay, and I shall not suffer false modesty to assert, that my finances stand in no need of it; because it is not the time, nor the attention only, which the public duties I am engaged in require, but their bringing upon me applicants, recommenders of applicants, and seekers of information, none of whom perhaps are my acquaint-

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ances, with their servants and horses to aid in the consumption of my forage, and what to me is more valuable, my time, that I most regard; for a man in the country, nine miles from any house of entertainment, is differently situated from one in a city, where none of these inconveniences are felt.

“Yet even under the circumstances which may be little known to those who would appreciate them, and would be totally disregarded by such as are always on the look-out for something to cavil at, I am resolved to draw nothing from the public but reimbursements for actual expenditures; unless by being called into the field I should be entitled to full pay and the emoluments of office.

“Without this it would be said by the latter description of people, that I was enjoying retirement on very easy and lucrative terms; whilst the former might remark, that I had forgotten the conditions on which I accepted my commission.

“I thought this explanation of my motives, for declining the acceptance of your offer, was due to your kind attention.”

Happily the war cloud passed and the preparations made were but the gesture of his old-time vigor and genius.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PROMOTER OF EDUCATION

IN this day when millions are being given by business men to our colleges and universities out of business profits, and when the education of our youth is a constant subject of interest, we must credit Washington with having been among the early few, if not the first, to start the movement. There were no free schools in Virginia before 1785. Private schools were quite numerous where parents who were able to pay tuition could send their children. Washington had paid all or a large part of the expense of educating ten boys and girls. He saw the children of the poor, and especially those children orphaned by the war, being left without any educational opportunities. The war had ruined many people financially, who before the Revolution were able to give advantages to their children. The unprivileged child was in the majority. It was evident to the observant Washington that such a situation portended ill to the republic which must rely in the future upon educated citizens. He had often regretted his own meager schooling, and his heart was touched by the children left helpless by reason of the sacrifice made by their parents in the securing of the blessings of liberty. Accordingly he became a part of a movement to establish free schools.

## PROMOTER OF EDUCATION

Through his efforts and those of others, the Alexandria Academy was opened in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1785 as a free school for orphans and the children of indigent parents. In order to start the necessary endowment for maintenance, Washington announced that he would leave the school £1000 in his will and would pay the interest of £50 a year on this sum until it was available at his death. This he faithfully did. The Virginia Assembly gave the Academy a charter in 1786. The endowment plan Washington devised has ever since furnished a successful basis on which many an educational institution has raised large funds. It has a practical business appeal, which business men have approved and acted upon.

To further the general education he decided to devote the capital stock which had been given him in the James River Company and the Potomac Company, to the establishment of a "charity" school on each river, "for the education and support of the children of the poor in this country, particularly the children of those men of this description who have fallen in the defense of the right and liberties of it."

After investigation he left the 100 shares of the James River Company to Liberty Hall at Lexington, which, in 1798, in recognition of the gift changed its name to Washington College. Acknowledging the honor, Washington wrote June 17, 1798: ". . . to promote literature in this rising empire and to encourage the Arts, have ever been amongst the warmest wishes of my heart."



## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

This institution again changed its name a few years later to Washington and Lee University, because of the devoted service rendered it by General Robert E. Lee, while acting as its president.

As the plans for the Federal city advanced, Washington's idea for a national university took shape. January 28, 1795, he wrote to the Commission having in charge the laying out of the city, asking that they fix a site for such a university: "The federal city, for its centrality and the advantages, which in other respects it must have over any other place in the United States, ought to be preferred, as a proper site for such an University and if a plan can be adopted upon a scale as extensive as I have described, and the execution of it should commence under favorable auspices in a reasonable time, with a fair prospect of success, I will grant in perpetuity fifty shares in the navigation of the Potomac River towards the endowment of it."

This was equivalent to a gift of \$20,000. The Commission heartily approved the offer and selected a site extending south of Washington Circle along and between Twenty-second and Twenty-fifth streets to the high land known as Peter's Hill, overlooking the Potomac river. A memorial was sent to Congress, with the approval of the President, asking that proper legislation be made to found the university, but no action was taken.

In his last address to Congress in 1796 Washington again presents the need for such an institution, "to bring together

## PROMOTER OF EDUCATION

the youth from every quarter of our country to assimilate the principles, opinions and manners of our countrymen and thereby improve the prospects of a permanent union." He had intended to refer to the subject in his farewell address, but Hamilton persuaded him to put the matter squarely up to Congress in this address.

Jefferson, although sympathetic with the idea, was by this time against the practical plans of anything Washingtonian; the existing colleges allied themselves in opposition; the unconstitutionality of legislative action was urged, and Congress ignored the subject then as it has ever since.

Since 1898 the George Washington Memorial Association has been endeavoring to carry out Washington's idea. Recently it has, by reason of a Congressional grant of land, been able to complete the construction of a George Washington Memorial Building in Washington, D. C., which it hopes may be the beginning of a National University.

Once an idea passed his judgment it became a conviction with Washington, and action followed. Ever since the founding of the Alexandria Academy, he had never overlooked an opportunity to keep the subject of higher education before the public. In 1788 he was elected Chancellor of William and Mary College because of his "heart-felt desire to promote the cause of science." His expressions "literature" and the "arts" were his definitions of general education required by the average citizen. It was perfectly plain to him that liberty and intelligence must be

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

directed through education. To Congress, in 1790, he said: "There is nothing which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science and literature, knowledge is in every country the surest basis of happiness." In a letter to Robert Brooke, Governor of Virginia, dated March 6, 1795, he says: "The time is therefore come, when a plan of universal education ought to be adopted in the United States."

Some time afterwards he wrote Jefferson about the subject, opposing a movement, with which Jefferson was in accord, to foster the migration to the United States of the entire faculty of the University of Geneva, declaring: "The propriety of transplanting the professors in a body might be questioned for several reasons: among others, because they might not be all good characters, nor all sufficiently acquainted with our language. And, again, having been at variance with the levelling party of their own country, the measure might be considered as an aristocratical movement, by more than these who, without any just cause that I can discover, are continually sounding the bell of aristocracy."

His address, February 22, 1789, on "The Encouragement of Higher Education" demonstrates his grasp of the problems and was, perhaps, the first public presentation of this subject from the broad standpoint of universal education as a function of the national government.

## PROMOTER OF EDUCATION

After years of thought and effort, in the quietude of his closing days, he makes his final contribution to the subject in his will:

“Item—Whereas by a law of the Commonwealth of Virginia enacted in the year 1785, the legislature thereof was pleased (as an evidence of its approbation of the services I had rendered the public during the Revolution—and partly, I believe in consideration of my having suggested the vast advantages which the community would derive from the extension of its Inland navigation, under legislative patronage) to present me with one one hundred shares of one hundred dollars each, in the incorporated company established for the purpose of extending the navigation of James River from the tide-water to the mountains; and also with fifty shares of one hundred pounds sterling each in the corporation of another company likewise established for the similar purpose of opening the navigation of the River Potomac from tide water to Fort Cumberland; the acceptance of which, although the offer was highly honorable and grateful to my feelings, was refused, as inconsistent with a principle which I had adopted, and had never departed from, namely, not to receive pecuniary compensation for any services I could render my country in its arduous struggle with Great Britain for its Right; and because I had evaded similar propositions from other States in the Union—adding to this refusal, however, an intimation, that, if

## WASHINGTON AS A BUSINESS MAN

it should be the pleasure of the legislature to permit me to appropriate the said shares to public uses, I would receive them on those terms with due sensibility—and this having consented to in flattering terms, as will appear by a subsequent law and sundry resolutions, in the most ample and honorable manner, I proceed after this recital for the more correct understanding of the case to declare—that it has always been a source of serious regret with me to see the youth of these United States sent to foreign countries for the purpose of education, often before their minds were formed or they had imbibed any adequate ideas of the happiness of their own, contracting too frequently not only habits of dissipation and extravagance, but principles unfriendly to Republican Governm't and to the true and genuine liberties of mankind, which hereafter are rarely overcome—for these reasons it has been my ardent wish to see a plan devised on a liberal scale which would have a tendency to spread systematic ideas through all parts of this rising Empire, thereby to do away local attachments and state prejudices as far as the nature of things would, or indeed ought to admit, from our national councils—looking anxiously forward to the accomplishment of so desirable an object as this is, (in my estimation) my mind has not been able to contemplate any plan more likely to effect the measure than the establishment of a University in a central part of the United States to which the youth of fortune and talent from all parts thereof might be sent for the comple-

expect a thousand cents, to talk with facility  
and ease of his expectation of receiving ten  
times as many dollars - the <sup>weight of</sup> ~~disappoint~~ <sup>power</sup> of  
which, according to his account, he conceives  
is quite sufficient to ward off the payment of  
his own solemn Contracts, & to keep his Credit

I am not unacquainted, Sir, with  
your repeated declarations of your having  
purchased my Lands on the Great Kaskas-  
qua, & endeavouring by that means, and  
such like impositions, & misrepresenta-  
tions, to obtain extensive credit where  
you were not known - others, to enquire  
into the truth of these things, have been wri-  
ten to me on the subject - the cautions  
therefore how you procure a explanation  
that must, inevitably, end in your disgrace  
& entire loss of character - A character  
is valuable to all men, and not less so to a  
Speculator -

I wish, before I conclude, to give you  
in the most unequivocal terms of the thing  
First, that I am in extreme want of the  
money

#### WASHINGTON NOT TO BE IMPOSED UPON

Letter to impostor who attempts to get credit by claiming business  
relations with Washington.

[See page 280]



## PROMOTER OF EDUCATION

tion of their education in all the branches of polite literature, in arts and sciences—in acquiring knowledge in the principles of Politics and good Government and (as a matter of infinite importance in my judgment) by associating with each other and forming friendships in Juvenile years, be enabled to free themselves in a proper degree from those local prejudices and habitual jealousies which have just been mentioned and which when carried to excess are never failing sources of disquietude to the Public mind and pregnant of mischievous consequences to this country:—under these impressions so fully dilated,—

“Item—I give and bequeath in perpetuity the fifty shares which I hold in the Potomac Company (under the afore-said Acts of the Legislature of Virginia) towards the endowment of a university to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia, under the auspices of the General Government, if that Government should incline to extend a fostering hand towards it,—until such seminary be established, and the funds arising on these shares shall be required for its support, my further will and desire is that the profit accruing therefrom shall whenever the dividends are made be laid out in purchasing stock in the Bank of Columbia or some other Bank at the discretion of my Executors, or by the Treasurer of the United States for the time being under the direction of Congress, provided that Honorable body should patronize the measure. And the dividends proceeding from the purchase of such stock is to



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be vested in more stock and so on until a sum adequate to the accomplishment of the object is obtained, of which I have not the smallest doubt before many years pass away, even if no aid or encouragement is given by Legislative authority or from any other source.

“Item—The hundred shares which I held in the James River Company I have given and now confirm in perpetuity to and for the use and benefit of Liberty Hall Academy in the County of Rockbridge, in the Commonwealth of Virga.”

No business man since has more accurately and conscientiously planned and directed a gift than did Washington in bequeathing these shares of stock to educational purposes. He set an example which has influenced many a will since. In a letter to Hamilton in September, 1796, Washington, after stating his idea of a National University, says that when the Potomac river navigation project is completed, the shares of stock in the Potomac Company “will amount to pounds 1200 or pounds 1500 Sterling a year and become a rapidly increasing fund.” He died in the belief that he had, both in word and deed, made a worth-while contribution to the cause of education. Undoubtedly he hoped his example would inspire others, but he little knew of the vast influence it was to yield.

Such a national university as Washington urged has often been discussed since by statesmen, but the general development of educational institutions has been so rapid by reason

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of the gifts from people of wealth, and the curricula has been so expanded by the advance of learning, that the particular object Washington had in mind, which was to fill the youth with a knowledge of our country and its government so as to develop a higher type of citizenry, has received scant attention until recently. Politics, the science of government, is now being taught in many American colleges and universities.

The reach of the national government into matters educational, especially in aid of agriculture, would undoubtedly have his enthusiastic approval, and our public school system would be his delight.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LAST DAYS

THE deep longing of many years, that he might live in peace and quietude at Mount Vernon, was realized finally at the age of sixty-six. Washington had planned well for it. His income was sufficient, but only so, for his simple desires and economical habits. A mind and conscience at ease, he was prepared to say with Henry Van Dyke,

"I shall grow old but never lose life's zest  
Because the road's last turn will be the best."

The following incident illuminates the character of the real man, who full of honors and at the end of his great career, was human still. Elkanah Watson, on a visit to Washington at Mount Vernon shortly after his return, was suffering from a severe cold and a heavy cough. He relates that after he had retired, "the door of my room was gently opened, and, on drawing my bed curtains, to my utter astonishment, I beheld Washington himself, standing at my bedside, with a bowl of hot tea in his hand."

During his sixty-sixth year, Washington began the systematic arrangement of all his papers and documents, constructing a special room for them. Except in the Revolu-

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tionary War period, he had kept diaries, now numerous. He wrote on both sides of the page, in small almanacs or pocket memorandum books, containing about one hundred pages, of 3½ by 5 inches in size. He preserved hundreds of letters and many more copies of letters he had written, as well as notes and memoranda on many subjects. We are not informed as to the motives in keeping these diaries and papers, but as we read them and realize their great historical value as sources of information and explanation, and especially as turning a calcium light on his own life, we cannot escape the conclusion that he knew they would some day be of use for these very purposes. He had neither time nor inclination to write an autobiography, as many men do today; but he knew his biography would be written and wished to furnish as much accurate data as possible concerning matters of interest to himself.

Writing to Lawrence Lewis, late in life, he says: "The expense at which I live, and the unproductiveness of my estate, will not allow me to lessen my income while I remain in my present situation. On the contrary, were it not for occasional supplies of money in payment for lands sold within the last four or five years, to the amount of upwards of fifty thousand dollars, I should not be able to support the former without involving myself in debt and difficulties."

This was by way of excuse for not doing more for this nephew, who had lately married. Lewis is told, however,

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that there is left him by will that part of Mount Vernon "which lies north of the public road leading from Gum Springs to Colchester, containing about two thousand acres, with the Dogue-River Farm, mill and distillery." He adds: "I transmit a plan of it, every part of which is correctly laid down and accurately measured, showing the number of fields, lots, meadows, &c. with the contents, and relative situation of each."

The nephew was urged to build on the land at once, with the assurance:

"That if hereafter I should find cause to make any other disposition of the property here mentioned, I will pay the actual cost of such buildings to you or yours.

"Although I have not the most distant idea that any event will happen that could effect a change in my present determination, nor any suspicion that you or Nelly could conduct yourselves in such a manner as to incur my serious displeasure, yet, at the same time, that I am inclined to do justice to others, it behooves me to take care of myself, by keeping the staff in my own hands." The love for these relatives which prompted this generosity did not cloud his judgment as to the best arrangement for the protection of all parties concerned.

The only new venture undertaken during his last two years was the construction and operation of a distillery. The accounts of this business, still preserved, show it to have been

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reasonably profitable. Anticipating the need of borrowing some money for this enterprise, he applied to William Herbert, President of the Bank of Alexandria, on October 4, 1798, for a loan rating and was informed that he could have from \$6,000 to \$10,000, on his note and that Mr. Herbert would be ready to sign as one of his sureties.

He had been endeavoring to close up his land deals. A letter to James Welch illustrates his difficulties with several persons to whom he had sold lands and who would not pay according to agreement. In December 1797, Washington had leased 23,216 acres on the Great Kanawha to Welch for thirty years with privilege of renewal for ninety-nine years and option to purchase for eight dollars per acre within six years. Welch had failed to pay, giving many excuses, the last one being that he was going to Kentucky to sell some of his own lands there to raise money to pay Washington.

“Mount Vernon, April 7, 1799

“Sir: I have received your letter of the 10th of March from Rockingham County, and although I have no expectation of deriving any payment from your Kentucky Expedition, yet, I will, (inconvenient as it is to me) wait a while longer to know the result of it; desiring you to be persuaded meantime, that you have not got a person now, that will be trifled with in your dealings.

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"It would be uncandid, Mr. Welch, not to inform you, that I have heard too much of your character lately, not to expect tale after tale, and relation after relation, of your numerous disappointments, by way of excuses, for the non-compliance of your agreements with me;—but this I can assure you will not answer your purposes. It is not difficult for a person who has no ground on which to expect a thousand cents, to talk with facility and ease of his expectation of receiving ten times as many dollars—the relation of disappointments in which according to his account, he conceives is quite sufficient to ward off the payment of his own Solemn Contracts & to Satisfy his Creditors.

"I am not unacquainted, Sir, with your repeated declarations of your having purchased my lands on the Great Kanhawa & endeavoring by that means and such like impositions & misrepresentations to obtain extensive credit where you were not known. Letters, to inquire into the truth of these things, have been written to me on the subject. Be cautious therefore, how you provoke explanations that must inevitably, end in your disgrace and entire loss of character. A character is valuable to all men and not less so to a speculator.

"I will, before I conclude, assure you in the most unequivocal terms of two things, First, that I am in extreme want of the money which you gave me a solemn promise I should receive the first of January last,—and secondly—that, however, you may have succeeded in imposing upon and deceiv-

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ing others, you shall not practice the like game with me, with impunity.

“To contract new debts, is not to pay old ones. Nor is it proof that you have any disposition to do it when you are proposing to buy lands &c& on credit (or partial advances) which can answer no other purpose than that of speculation—or (if you have them) of with holding the means which ought to be applied in the discharge of engagements & debts, proceeding therefrom, which you are bound by every tie to do.

“Consider this letter well and then write without any deception to, Sir,

“Your very Hbl. Sevt.

“GEO. WASHINGTON.

“MR. JAMES WELCH.”

For fifty years he had been accumulating his wealth by diligent work in making his farms profitable and by careful real estate investments. The proceeds of land sales above actual needs were regularly invested in more land. Sixteen years of this time (eight as Commander in Chief of the Army and eight as President) his living expenses were not dependent upon his business earnings, yet a scrutiny of his items of account leads one to believe that he did not include many items of expenditure which might have been legitimately charged. Most of the funds received from the Custis estate were lost through depreciated currency and



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only by holding land was he able to overcome greater losses in cash. His fortune grew gradually by careful, systematic management. That it would have been much greater had he devoted those years of unselfish public service to private business goes without saying. The prosperity which the new government brought to the country as a whole, gave him an earned increment in the value of his real estate. Washington gave freely of his time and talent to the welfare of his country and yet made money. An English writer has ventured to say in his "Outline of History" that Washington was "conspicuously indolent." On the contrary, he was conspicuously industrious. Witness words written within a year of his death:

"To make and sell a little flour annually, to repair houses (going fast to ruin), to build one for the security of my papers of a public value and to amuse myself in agriculture and rural pursuits, will constitute employment for the few years I have to remain on this terrestrial globe."

On December 10, 1799, determining to straighten out his business affairs, pay off his obligations and collect accounts, he sent to James Anderson an advertisement to be inserted in the Alexandria papers, stating that, "Claims of every kind and nature whatsoever against me, be brought by the first of January, that I may wipe them off and begin anew. All balances in my favor must either be received or reduced to specialties that there may be no dispute hereafter."

## LAST DAYS

Calmly anticipating the inevitable, he drew his will himself, without legal assistance, endeavoring as he says: "to be plain and explicit in all the devises, even at the expense of prolixity, perhaps of tautology." "I, George Washington, a citizen of the United States and lately President of the same," was the way he identified himself. He belonged to no locality. He was a thorough Nationalist. He had builded the United States and loved it.

Should any dispute arise over the terms of the will (the hope being expressed that it may not occur) an arbitration board of three persons is provided for, who "shall, unfettered by law or legal constructions, declare their sense of the testator's intentions; and such decision is, to all intents and purposes, to be as binding on the parties as if it had been given in the Supreme Court of the United States." The document stipulates for the payment of his debts, of which there were but few, totalling about \$25,000 (which was certainly small for an estate worth perhaps \$500,000); for freeing all his slaves upon the death of his wife; directs the care of all old and decrepit negroes for life and all negro infants until twenty-one years old, specifying that the latter shall be taught to read and write and "brought up to some useful occupation."

This clause expresses his definite and unchangeable belief that slaves should be freed and pensioned. They were not, in his opinion, profitable laborers because of the expense in the upkeep of large families and the lack of incentive to

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conscientious labor. He believed free labor under wages was better for both employer and employee. The economic factors in his judgment were all against slavery, to say nothing of the human element. His diaries and letters contain many references to the burden of many slaves, and he repeatedly said he never profited from slave labor. He saw no way out except in gradual enlightenment of the people. An interesting evidence of this belief was expressed to Sir John Sinclair, the famous English agriculturist, to whom he wrote in 1796 concerning the greater increase in the value of farm land in Pennsylvania over Virginia and Maryland, saying the former had a denser population and "because there are laws here for the gradual abolition of slavery, which neither of the two states above mentioned have at present, but which nothing is more certain than that they must have, and at a period not remote." Such was his mature judgment when he wrote his will.

Washington further bequeathed the income of four thousand dollars to provide schooling in Alexandria "for the purpose of educating such orphan children, or the children of such poor and indigent persons, as are unable to accomplish it with their own means." Reference has already been made to the bequests for other educational purposes.

Believing, as he did, in bank stock as a safe investment, the will prescribes that the income from the sale of land under existing contracts shall be invested by his executors in bank stock and the dividends paid to his wife.

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Attached to the will is a schedule of property, listing nineteen different parcels of land in Virginia, aggregating 40,571 acres. Each parcel is described with information as to the qualities and sale value. In Maryland are listed 1119 acres; in Pennsylvania, 234; in New York, 1000; in Ohio, 3051 (then North West Territory) on which he tells of "a valuable bank of iron ore"; in Kentucky, 5000 acres; two lots in City of Washington which cost \$963 and were valued at \$15,000, and four lots valued at 12 cents a square foot; a half-acre corner lot in Alexandria; a lot in Winchester and two lots in Bath or Warm Springs.

His investment stocks were itemized as 24 shares in the Potomac Company; 5 shares in James River Company; 170 shares in Bank of Columbia; and \$1000 in stock of Bank of Alexandria; \$6246 in United States 6% and 3% bonds. These bonds were what he received from the Government for over \$33,000 loaned it during the Revolutionary War. He inventories his "Stock Living" consisting of horses, mules, cattle, sheep, hogs, as of \$15,653 value, although his manager he says estimated them worth 7000 pounds or \$35,000. One desiring a detailed account of the property listed in the will with a history of each piece will be interested in the recent work of Eugene E. Prussing, entitled "The Estate of George Washington, Deceased."

A will often reveals the man, for it contains his final evaluation of his wealth in its relation to others. If we

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had only the Last Will and Testament of George Washington by which to judge his life, we could appraise its greatness and its humanity. It is what someone has called an "autobiographic will."

"'Tis well," were his last words. Can any more fitting expression of his life be coined?

Benjamin Franklin in his will gave testimony to the worth of the man with whom he had been intimately connected during the strenuous days of many years intercourse:

"My fine crab tree stick, with a gold head, curiously wrought in the form of the cap of Liberty, I give to my friend and the friend of Mankind, General Washington. If it were a sceptre, he had merited it and would become it."

The conditions and environments under which the colonists lived developed a practical mind. There was a continual struggle with nature for a harvest and a constant exertion to dispose of that harvest for an adequate price. Out of this practicality came practical ideas and ideals, which gave birth to a new nation, a new constitution for its guidance and a George Washington.

Washington changed the world's idea of greatness. His career gave a new definition to civilization, of manhood, of public conscience and of human liberty. He exemplified the patriotism and human service of wealth—demonstrated the worth of business ideals. The making of money did not smother his soul. Ambition was held in leash. John Mar-

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shall says: "If Washington possessed ambition, that passion was, in his bosom, so regulated by principles, or controlled by circumstances, that it was neither vicious nor turbulent. Intrigue was never employed as the means of its gratification, nor was personal aggrandizement its object." His true biography must portray the union of a social conscience with a successful business career. His type is still the standard of leadership in the United States of America.

"The one remains,  
The many change and pass."



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